

Evangelism the Right Way

Acts 15:36-16:10

1755

I've entitled this message, "Evangelism the right way." Ever since the Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature we have been busy pursuing the ministry of evangelism. The church has done this since the very statement of Christ, and I suppose there are as many methods as there have been weeks since Christ said that. There are all kinds of approaches. There are multitudes of different efforts that have gone on throughout the history of the church in different climates, in different cultures, in different periods of history, all under the area of evangelism. There are multiplied thousands of different tracts and pamphlets and printed devices that can be used today in evangelism. There is everything from a very simplistic presentation of basic verses to a very sophisticated media presentations of Christ, very complicated approaches as opposed to simple ones.

I've seen a tract that is based on the fact "The one thing you need to know" and then I've seen a booklet called "39 steps to salvation." So everything in between, whether it's one thing you need to know or 39 ways to get there, there are many different methods and many different approaches in terms of our efforts at evangelism. We have periodic schools of evangelism. We have great training centers for evangelism. We have seminaries that have evangelism departments and there are some professors of evangelism in some seminaries and even areas in some colleges. Now there's no exhausting of this. It has gotten to the place where it is even parodied somewhat.

There was in recent years a film produced entitled *The Gospel Blimp*. Some of you may have seen that. It hasn't been around for a while but it was a guy who wanted to reach his neighbor with the Gospel and so he bought a blimp so he could fly over his neighbor's house and drop tracts in his backyard. Of course it turned into an International Blimps Association and it went on and on and on until it got so organized and then everywhere they dropped tracts people were cursing at them and they were cluttering up the yards. It was a parody on the super method, and incidentally when the guy was getting all of the blimp stuff ready his neighbor kept coming over and asking him if he'd like to go to the beach with him and he had a perfect opportunity there but there have been no end to the methods of evangelism, and I'm not discounting them for they are good in most cases and meaningful and helpful and we've used them with great benefit and God has blessed. But underneath all this methodology - and I think very often we get lost in that - underneath all this methodology there are some foundation features of evangelism that are very important, and I don't care what the methodology is, the foundations are the same.

Now these are given in Scripture in many places very directly but if you've learned anything about scripture you've learned that what God wants to say not only comes directly but very often it comes indirectly. For example, without making any theological statement at all in these verses, there is no theological statement, there is no doctrinal statement, yet you have here in an indirect implication the foundations of effective evangelism. We've seen this in the book of Acts many times, haven't we?

They key to Bible study, friends is to be able to take the Scripture and extract the principles that are there either by direct statement or by implication. That is what it is to study Scripture.

And so as we go through these verses I'm not interested in just saying, "Paul and Barnabas did this and then they went to Derbe and there they met Timothy and then they went over there and then they did that and goodbye, God bless you, have a nice day." That isn't it. That's fine and that gives us historical background but underneath all this what is the purpose of the Holy Spirit? What principles are implied in what is going on here? Now I believe that's really the difference between real Bible study, real Bible teaching, and that, which is superficial, and so we want to look here at some foundation features of evangelism done the right way.

Now keep in mind that as the Holy Spirit has been writing the book of Acts these kinds of things have been in the text over and over and over again, and we're gonna see them from a different angle. Now as we approach the 36th verse of the 15th chapter of Acts we remember that for 15 chapters the church has been growing. The church has just gone through a crisis. Satan tried to split the church. He tried to split the Jews and the gentiles over the issue of legalism. Satan tried to foul up doctrine. By getting a new doctrine of salvation you're saved by faith plus works. Satan tried to halt missions by stopping the free message of salvation and making gentiles become Jews first so Satan tried to mess up the church, doctrine, and missions, but as it always happens God reversed everything and instead the church established its doctrine, came out of the of the Jerusalem Council in great unity and the process of evangelism was speeded up. So everything Satan tried to retard he only succeeded in speeding up.

In verse 35 picking it up, "After all this decision had been made and Paul and Barnabas along with Judas and Silas had gone back to Antioch, which was the base of gentile missions, and they reported the great findings of the Jerusalem Council that salvation was indeed by grace, then they went back to their ministry and things really took off. Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch" verse 35, "Teaching and preaching," that's evangelism and edification, "the Word of the Lord with many others also." They have a little parenthesis. In chapter 15 they've got their theology squared away, they've got their directions squared away, they've got their unity in Christ squared away and they took off to finish the task in reaching the world for Christ.

Now as we come to verse 36 the Jerusalem Council is over. The results have been announced to the people in Antioch. There's great rejoicing, great celebration, great joy because their celebration is valid by grace alone. That's how you're saved. It's time to preach the message and the church begins to move out. And as we see just the beginnings in our text of the second missionary tour, implied in this narrative are the foundation principles of evangelism that is done right, and I'm gonna give them to you simply and we'll cover them one at a time.

Right evangelism calls for the right passion, the right priority, the right personnel, the right precautions, and the right presentation, and the right place. Now don't worry about writing those down. We'll get them one at a time. I'll put that all together and give you a definition of right evangelism. You ready for this? Effective evangelism is the right passion directed toward the right priorities by the right people who take the right precautions to make the right presentation in the right place. You got it? Don't worry about it. We'll review it. Effective evangelism begins then with the right passion.

Look at verse 36. Now it wasn't as if Paul and Barnabas had nothing to do, and keep in mind that

one of the principles you see in Acts is that God always uses busy people. Well Paul and Barnabas had plenty to do. They were teaching, preaching the Word and really having a great ministry but verse 36, "And some days after" - and incidentally in Greek the term "some days" is an undetermined amount of time, not very long. Perhaps significantly months but we really don't know. "Some days after Paul said to Barnabas these three words" to begin with in English, "Let us go." Now stop there for a minute. At the risk of spiritualizing the text, this gives us a little insight into a dimension of Paul that we run into again and again and again. Hard to keep him in one spot.

Now the verse is not trying to teach us that Paul liked to go somewhere. I'm simply using that statement to cast our minds to some other Scriptures that do teach that. Paul had this in his mind that no matter where he was there was someone else out there that needed him, and he may have been effectively ministering there but tugging and pulling at his heart were the regions beyond. He had a passion for the gentile world that is lying yet to the west of where he was located in Antioch, and always in his brain were simmering these great schemes of reaching people. I don't think he ever saw a ship but that he thought if he might get on it and take the Gospel. I don't think he ever saw a mountain but that he thought, "I ought to cross that mountain and find the people that are on the other side and take them the Gospel." He was a passionate man. He was a man driven by a desire to communicate Christ. He was a tremendously motivated man. You can read 2 Corinthians 4 and 2 Corinthians 5 and you'll find the tremendous power of his motives.

In the first place in 2 Corinthians 4 that he was motivated because of the mercy God had given to him. I mean he was so thankful for the salvation he had that he felt that in gratitude he was a debtor to everybody else and to God, and he goes on from there to talk about the fact that his love for Christ constrained him, the love of Christ that had been planted in him. And he talked about the fact that he knew that if any man was in Christ he was a new creation and that moved him, and he also talked about the fact that he knew that he must stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give account for what he had done and that moved him.

Well on the negative side he said this, "If the Gospel be hid, it is hid" to what? To those that are lost, and he knew if he didn't speak it the people who needed to hear it wouldn't hear it. He was a motivated man. He was a passionate man, and everywhere he went it was only a step to somewhere else and believe me, friends, nobody ever was really effective in evangelism who didn't have that kind of passion. You can train people up to their eyeteeth but if they don't have that kind of drive and that kind of motive to communicate the Gospel, all the training dissipates the day they walk out of the class. Believe me, we have seen that many times.

Just to give you an illustration, turn to the end of the Book of Romans. You would think well, here's Paul. He probably wants to get to Rome. I mean if he could get to Rome, the seat of the Roman Empire, right? Highly populated area. A guy could spend the rest of his life evangelizing Rome and never get the job done. I mean what could be done in Rome could take a lifetime and never scratch the surface, and if Paul could just get to Rome, and here in Romans he says to them, "I'm coming to you. I'm coming. I want to impart on you some spiritual gift" in chapter 1, "I want to minister to you. I'm a debtor to you. I want to get to Rome." He always had this longing, this passion to reach those further out.

Well you know something? Amazing thing about this man, verse 24 of Romans 15. He says, "Whenever I take my journey to Spain I'll come to you." You know what he saw Rome as? Just a stopover on the way to Spain. Somebody says, "Why did he want to go to Spain?" Somebody else

said, "Well it was there. Why else?" It was about as far as you could go. The next step was into the ocean. The only thing that was a barrier to him was the capability of reaching a place. He wanted to go to Rome only just to get some supplies to put some things together to go to Spain and he said the same thing in verse 28. He says, "When therefore I have performed this and sealed to them this food I'll come by you into Spain." You say, "Why do you want to go to Spain?"

Well aside from the fact that it was there; there were some great men there. Some of the great - well the Roman empire of course was occupying Spain and there's still evidence of Roman roads and Roman architecture there but men were there of great fame - Marshall, the master of the epigram, Luke and the poet, _____ who were literary geniuses were there. Quintillion the great orator was there and most of all Seneca was there, Seneca the stoic, master philosopher, Seneca the tutor of Nero, Seneca the Prime Minister of the Roman Empire. It was a great place to go and Paul could see tremendous possibilities.

He was a passionate man. He was passionate for evangelism. That made the difference. He was likened to Henry Martyn who went he went to India said, "Now let me burn out for God." He was so lost in the love of the people there. The Apostle Paul said, "Whoa is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." He was totally lost in the passion of proclamation. Robert Moffat, the great evangelist missionary wrote this, evidencing the same attitude, "My album is the savage breast where tempests brood and savages rest without one ray of light. To write the name of Jesus there and see that savage bow in prayer and point to worlds more bright and fair, this is my soul's delight." Well that's the passion.

Now I don't want to just get oratorical about it. There's only one way you'll ever have that kind of passion and that's not by learning evangelistic methods and that's not by saying in your mind, "I think I'll have that passion!" and grunting a lot and grimacing and groaning and stirring up some kind of spiritual frenzy. There's only one way you'll ever have that passion and that is, friends, to begin with it's unnatural, right? It is a supernatural one.

The only way you'll ever know that kind of passion is when you're so mingled with the person of Jesus Christ that He loves through you. You see? That's why Paul said, "Above all things that I may know Him." That's why over and over again he would say, "Be followers of me as I am of Christ that for me to live as Christ and the life which I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God." In other words he was lost in Christ and Christ in him so that there wasn't even a dividing between who was doing the loving and who was passionate and who was caring. Passion that is legitimate comes when you are so lost in the mingling of your spirit with the Spirit of Christ, that it is He who is passionate through you. You say, "How do you get there?" By studying the Word of God simply "as you gaze into His Glory" 2 Corinthians 3:18 "you're changed into His image." The only way to come into His image is to gaze into His glory; the only place to gaze into His glory is in The Book, right?

So first of all, true evangelism is built on the right passion and we cannot take somebody who doesn't really have that kind of passion and just give them some format. It runs out. And I don't even think it's as simple as just keep on training them over and over again. I think it demands that they become lost in the person of Jesus Christ so that He is loving through them. Second thing, right evangelism not only needs the right passion, it demands the right priority. This is great. I love this. Verse 36; let's go back. "And some days after Paul says to Barnabas, 'let's go and watch again and visit our brother and in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord and see how they do.'" Now stop there. That's a very significant statement.

Now when you think of Paul do you think of Paul as a local pastor? He was in Antioch for three years in _____ and in other places, but when you think of Paul you think of a missionary evangelist don't you? Sure, he was an Apostle. He was sent. He was the apostle of the gentiles. We think of him as a church planter. Now when we think in our minds today of a pastor we think of a guy who stays around a long time and lives in a house in the neighborhood and teaches the Bible. When we think of an evangelist we think of a guy with a briefcase and a handful of sermons and you heard him in several different cities and he gave the same message and this kind of thing, and you think of a kind of traveling guy, see? Well that's really not the Biblical picture of an evangelist. We think of an evangelist as a guy who runs around and gets people saved and then leaves them around for Christians to follow up and that's basically what evangelism is today.

But you know what Paul was in terms of an evangelist? He was a Biblical evangelist in so far as he saw his responsibility not only as winning people but as maturing them, and I want you to notice that when he had opportunity to take off on a second missionary tour in verse 36 he was planning with Barnabas to go right back to the same place they just finished evangelizing, Galatia. "Let's go, Barnabas!" "Where, Paul? The world is at our feet. We're empowered by the Holy Spirit. The whole world is out there! Where do we go?" "Well let's go back to those people that we already went to Christ." You say, "Has he lost a sense of his calling?" No, not at all. Do you know what the priority is in evangelism? Discipleship. It is discipleship believe me. We say a lot about this but it's true. Visit our brethren in every city. You say, "Well why does he want to go back there?" Let me give you two simple reasons. One, his love for his own spiritual children.

I think one of the things that very often is missing in our evangelism and I'm guilty of this I think too often, is a failure to really love the individual that we've led to Christ to the point where we feel this tremendous responsibility. Paul loved his spiritual children. I believe he wanted to go back just because he loved them and he loved their fellowship and he wanted to see if they were growing. Go to Philippians 1 and let me illustrate it to you, verse 3.

He says, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now." He just loved the fellowship of these Philippians he had won to Christ. Go look at verse 8, "For God is my witness. God knows my heart. How greatly I long after you all in the tender mercies of Jesus Christ." He longed to be with them. He loved to be with them. The only thing better than being with them was going to Heaven. Remember what he said? And you know over in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 he was saying the same thing. He says, "Brethren" verse 17, "Being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart." He says, "I've been away physically but my heart is there. I endeavored more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Why? Oh, you're our glory and our joy." He had a love for those he had led to Christ and he longed to see them built up.

1 Corinthians 4 is interesting. Verse 14 says, "I write not these things to shame you but as my beloved sons I warn you." Even when he was lambasting the Corinthians he says, "Now take this as it comes. This is not to shame you. This is to warn you." And he goes on in the next verse, "You have 10,000 instructors in Christ but you don't have very many fathers." In other words he says, "You've got all kinds of people who'd be real happy to discipline you. You don't have too many that'll love you like I love you so you'd better take the love of a loving father. You'd better take the wisdom of a loving father. The only other alternative is to take the discipline of 10,000 who are gonna discipline you" and the word "instructor" is a _____, which was a slave who tutored a young child and he didn't

do much teaching and every time you saw a picture of a slave he had a whip in his hand. _____ was somebody who beat the kid into submission. Paul says, "You may have 10,000 people with whips but you've only got one loving father. You'd better take my advice." So Paul saw himself as a loving father responsible for the spiritual care of his children.

Bishop Riley said regarding George Whitfield, he said, "They couldn't hate the man who wept so much over their souls." He's right. First of all I believe Paul wanted to go back because he loved those children of his own, spiritual children. Secondly he went back because beloved he was committed to discipleship. You know what? If you don't learn anything about evangelism, learn this. The best way to evangelize is to produce one reproducing disciple. You got that? Paul knew that this running around creating spiritual infancy all over everywhere and leaving a whole lot of spiritual babes lying on their backs screaming was not the way to go at it because they weren't mature enough to reproduce but better to spend yourselves on some individuals that they might become mature and that they might carry the Gospel. You know Jesus didn't speak to large crowds very often and even when he did he spoke in parables and they didn't understand it. He spent most of his time with 12 individuals, didn't he? That's really the heart of evangelism. He was committed to the priority of maturing the believers. He himself knew that was his calling.

He wrote in Ephesians, "And He has given some apostles for the perfecting of the saints." He knew that his place was to build up believers. You know we've often thought, I know you have about Paul's three great missionary journeys, we think of carrying the Gospel to the heathen. You know where he went on his first missionary journey? Where? Galatia, right? I just told you. Where'd he go on his second missionary journey? Galatia. Now I want to show you something exciting. You know where he went on his third missionary journey? Acts 18:23. "And after he had spent some time there in Antioch he departed and went over all the country of Galatia. You say, "The guy is like a broken record. Hasn't he ever heard of Asia Minor? Hasn't he ever heard of whatever? What is this with Galatia?" He knew that ultimately the effective way to evangelize is to reproduce reproducing Christians, and to produce a reproducing Christian you must spend yourself on that individual, see?

That's why I believe - and this is my own personal opinion - in the long run the faithful teaching work of a local church will have a greater effect in evangelism than all the evangelistic crusades that come in from the outside. Now I believe God uses them but in the long run it is the reproduction of reproducing believers that is really what multiplies the effectiveness of the Gospel. Paul saw this Colossians 1:28 expressing this in these terms. He says, "Christ whom we preach, warning every man, teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." In other words he worked hard to bring people to maturity. In Colossians 4:12, "Epaphras was always praying that you may be perfect and complete in all the will of God." He too understood what the point was. You get a group of built-up saints and they will be productive. Paul said to the Colossians, "I want you to be rooted in Him, built up in Him, established in the faith" and when he left he said "I commend you to the Word of His grace which is able to build you up."

Isn't it wonderful - just to get a focus on it - isn't it wonderful that you meet a man with such a passion for evangelism but that his passion never ran ahead of the priority? Now I can imagine that a guy so passionate for the lost could've just really had a tough time hanging around Christians and nourishing and nurturing them but Paul was passionate but he was sensitive to the Spirit and he knew the priority. So Paul had a right priority to go with his right passion.

The third thing that I want to point out to you in the work of evangelism is the right personnel. The

basis of evangelism is a right passion and a right priority and the priority is discipleship, but it also demands the right personnel. God has special people for special tasks, and this came about in a very interesting circumstance. Look at verse 37. Here's how God chose the right personnel.

"Barnabas, determined to take with them John" and the Greek word "determined" is in the imperfect tense and it means he consistently and persistently determined. He just wouldn't back off, "To take John whose surname was Mark." Now Barnabas and Paul had made this little tentative deal to go off to Galatia and Barnabas says, "I want to take John Mark. I want to take John Mark. I want to take John Mark." Persistently he kept saying it.

"Well" you say, "What's wrong with that?" Remember John Mark? He took him one other time. What'd he do? He quit. Got up there to Perga in Pamphylia and took a look at the Taurus Mountains and all the stories he'd heard and took a look at the situation with Paul and Barnabas and Barnabas was getting kind of a second line thing and Paul was kind of taking over. Maybe he was a little jealous of his cousin, Barnabas, and maybe the glamour of missionary service was wearing off and he just peeled back and took off and went home, chapter 13 verse 13.

Well Barnabas was a kind of a loving, kind of a restoring character and John Mark was a wonderful guy. He was the son of the lady in whose house the prayer meeting was being held the night Peter got out of jail. He's also the author of the Gospel of Mark so he's no slouch, believe me. Comes from a good family, God really used him, but Paul didn't want to be dragging around dead weight and he didn't have any confidence in John Mark. So verse 38, "Paul thought it not good to take him with him, who departed from them." The word there "_____" comes from a root, which means apostasy. He wasn't a theological or a doctoral apostate. He was a service apostate. He put his hand to the plow and then he looked back.

Anyway, "He had departed from them from Pamphylia and went not with them to the work." Well Paul was a strong guy and there's one thing that's hard for strong people to tolerate - weakness. Paul was courageous and there's one thing hard for courageous people to tolerate, that's cowardice. Paul said, "Nope, nope, not one guy who went once and turned his back on it" and our hearts go with Barnabas. We see old Barnabas loving, encouraging. He's a good kid, but Barnabas was strong. He wouldn't bow down. He wouldn't say no. He said, "I want John Mark" and Paul says, "No." Well they had a real Donnybrook.

Verse 39, "The contention was so sharp" paroxysm, a sharp contention, "between them that they departed asunder." It doesn't say that they shook hands, put their arms around each other and said, "Well bless you, brother but we're going to part." You know what the word is for departed asunder? It's only used one other time in the New Testament and that's Revelations 6:14 when an apocalyptic disaster, the Heavens departed. So when they departed, they departed. There wasn't a lot of love there. They were a little bit bitter, and they blasted off in two directions and Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus.

That's home for Barnabas. That's where he came from. Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus to continue the ministry there and Barnabas committed to the same thing. Do what? Disciple the saints already in Cyprus and then send them out. Priorities. So off they went. Well the question always comes up, "Was Paul sinful here?" Well that's a little hard to answer. It's an interesting footnote. It says, "The contention was so sharp" that's the same word that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 13:5 and I can just see him there with the spirits dictating "love is not easily ____." Oh, yes. And he must've reminisced about the little paroxysm that he had with Barnabas. Who was right? Was Barnabas

right? Was Paul right? The Scripture doesn't say but I'll give you an opinion if you want one. I'll give you one if you don't want one. Anyway, I am a - I kind of side with Paul. I like Barnabas. My heart goes out to him and I'm glad he was a restoring guy and he did a marvelous work with Mark, and I believe God used him with Mark but I think Paul was right here and there's some reasons why. These are my reasons so take them for what they're worth.

One, Paul really was an apostolic authority over Barnabas and I feel that if Barnabas was truly the man that he should've been at that moment he would've submitted to Paul's apostolic authority. This is an issue I think is important. Paul was in terms of Christ the one who stood in rank next to Christ, and had Barnabas been what he should've been there would've been some submission.

Second reason. The Lord in the end - and since I believe in the sovereignty of God this is important - the Lord in the end did not have Mark go with Paul, did he? And it seems to me that that then was the plan of God that Mark not go originally. Now God of course had all of this within the framework of His plan but God did not plan for Mark to go and so it seems perhaps then that Barnabas was truly out of line in bringing Mark along or desiring to.

Third reason, verse 40. "Paul chose Silas and departed being commended by the brethren under the grace of God." The church definitely recognized the duo of Paul and Silas and perhaps they had the mind of the Spirit on that and so they commended them. There is no such commendation of Barnabas and Mark. In fact you get the idea a little bit in verse 39 that they kind of hustled to Cyprus.

Fourthly, I feel in my own mind that it was a lot better for Mark to go with Barnabas than it would've been for him to go along with him anyway. I think it would've been awfully tough on Mark to go along with Paul when he knew all the time that Paul didn't trust him, so I think the Spirit worked it out beautifully. That's just my opinion for what it's worth and you can deal with it in your own mind. Anyway, they took off, but I want you to remember this.

Barnabas later was commended by Paul, 1 Corinthians 9:6, Paul mentions him there. He held no continuing animosity, not Paul, not at all, and Mark, I mean Paul absolutely loved Mark but Paul was in Rome in jail and he wrote to Timothy and he says, "Timothy, come and be with me. Demas has forsaken me having loved the present world. Luke alone is with me, and by the way when you come would you bring Mark, for he is profitable to me?" Now that's restoration, isn't it? That's the loving heart of Paul so Barnabas did a good job on Mark, really shaped him up, and Paul loved him. Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark and Mark was a companion of Peter, 1 Peter 5:13. In fact many scholars say that the information in the Gospel of Mark comes from Peter and perhaps Peter was instrumental in working with Mark as the Holy Spirit used him to write.

Well that's a comforting passage that argument. You say, "Why?" Well it's wonderful to know the early church had problems. It's also wonderful to know Paul and Barnabas were human. It's also nice to know they forgave each other and restored each other. You know how the Holy Spirit does things. Satan tried to bring a rift and what happened? Instead of one missionary team he had two. Verse 40, "Paul chose Silas and departed being commended by the brethren under the grace of God" and the church commended these two. Now we met Silas just earlier. Silas was a prophet, verse 32 of chapter 15 says. Silas in verse 27 and verse 22 is mentioned because he was sent to Antioch from Jerusalem. Remember when they wrote the letter about the fact that salvation was by grace and they wanted the gentiles to know that? They sent Silas and Judas along, two disciples from Jerusalem to confirm in the minds of the gentiles that this in fact was the statement of the Jerusalem church so

Silas was a prophet and God had him for Paul.

Now I want you to see something beautiful. This is choice personnel. God chooses the right people for the right job, let me tell you. If you're gonna be romping around in the Roman Empire it's very helpful to be a Roman citizen. Silas was a Roman citizen. How perfect! If you're gonna be going around to towns and hitting synagogues it's helpful to be a Jew. Silas was a Jew. And if you're gonna be announcing the message that the Jerusalem church has established salvation by grace it's nice if you happen to be from the Jerusalem church. Silas was. And if you're going to be preaching and proclaiming it's nice if you're a prophet. Silas was. In every way God had the right man for the right job - Silas. In fact in this 16th chapter when they just got to Philippi and the whole thing fell right into place. Look at verse 35. You remember the little deal with the jailer and all that stuff and God brought an earthquake and the whole thing there.

Well when it was day the magistrates - that's the mucky-mucks in town - sent the sergeants, passing the buck down the line, and said, "Let those men go. Let them out of jail." And the keeper of the prison told this to Paul. "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now depart in peace." Listen to Paul's answer. "But Paul said unto them, 'They have beaten us openly, uncondemned being Romans and have cast us into prison.' They violated their right as Roman citizens to a fair trial. "And now do they thrust us out privately. You think those magistrates are gonna get off the hook? Nay. Barely. You let them come themselves and fetch us out!" Well that's a strong character, isn't it? You sergeants go back and get the real wheels and you bring them down here, and the sergeants told these words to the magistrates and they feared when they heard they were Romans, and they came and they begged them and brought them out and desired them to depart out of the city.

Now here are the fact that they were Romans was important. God knows all of the features about culture and about background and all these things that make for the right man in the right place. Well verse 41, "They went through Syria and Cilicia." I slapped a little map up there on the top so you kind of get an idea if you can see it of where this all is. Now just to give you a bearing here's Jerusalem down at the bottom and then north of Jerusalem you go to Antioch in the area known as Cilicia and Syria, this area. This is where they were preaching. The Gospel that started in Jerusalem spread north until it hit this area of Cilicia and Syria. Now in verse 41 they went through Syria and Cilicia doing what? Confirming. There's that word again. It comes from *sterex*, to lean upon. They were strengthening the churches, building up the saints. Again they knew the priority - with strong saints we'll reproduce. Babies don't have babies, adults do, that kind of thing, mature people.

So here they were ministering, confirming the saints, confirming the saints. Watch. Then they were ready to take off on their journey. Now where are they gonna go? They're gonna go to Galatia. How'd they go last time? Last time they went to Cyprus, remember? To the island, crossed the island, went north and came through this way. Who's already at Cyprus? Barnabas and Mark. No sense in going that way so they took off this way and they were gonna go to Galatia backwards. Do you know that the Holy Spirit had that whole thing laid out? Do you know why? Because as soon as they got into the back side of the plateau when they crossed the Cilician gates there was massive mountains and there was an area they had to climb through called the Cilician Gates to get into this plateau area and as soon as they had climbed into that area they came to these towns. They wouldn't have reached those towns until the end of their journey. Instead they reached them at the very beginning and you know who they met and the first one they came to? Verse 1, "They came to Derbe and Lystra and behold a certain disciple was there named Timothy." God wanted to add another member to the team. If they had gone the other way they wouldn't have gotten him until the tour was over.

God was setting everything in order to get the right personnel in this operation. Amazing how the Spirit works. And so they went into that area. Now we don't know whether Timothy was from Derbe or Lystra 'cause it doesn't say. Perhaps he was from Derbe and that's the significance of verse 2. It says that he was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium, meaning that his influence had spread to the other cities. Some would say he's from Lystra because Lystra is the common denominator in verse 1 and 2. Whatever. He was from that area up there on the plateau. It was really a wilderness area.

Now verse 1, they had come into that area and they met this disciple named Timothy, the son of a certain woman who was a Jewess. Now this woman's name is given to us by the Apostle Paul. Timothy's mother's name was Eunice, and his grandmother's name was Lois, and she was a believer but his father was a Greek, so here was a half-Jew, half-gentile. What a perfect choice. Here's a guy that's from the Roman Empire. He's got an in with the gentiles and he's got the potentiality of having an in with the Jews. He's the perfect man, the kind of the man of the world that can go both ways, and again God's selection of personnel is just remarkable as he selects out this one young man.

Now people say, "How old was Timothy when this started?" The best guess would be between 16 and 25 years old. He was a young man and I think Paul enjoyed the opportunity to disciple young men. He hadn't had great success with John Mark. I think he looked forward to success with Timothy. I think this is a great way to teach incidentally.

I look back on the days of my own life when in many, many ministries my father would take me and I would go along with him even as I endeavor to take my own sons at this point hoping that as I minister they will find certain reflections that perhaps will be lasting in their own lives, but anyway he wanted to take Timothy along, and you know without me saying it that Timothy was to become one of his most beloved and most loved companions. As an interesting footnote the particular imperfect tense that is used in relationship to Timothy's father indicates that Timothy's father was perhaps dead. It would be that he was a Greek with the emphasis on the "was" indicating that perhaps at the point it was written he was dead, so he may have been just the son of a widow, but Paul saw something good in him, something potential.

Verse 2, "Well reported of by the brethren." That's another very important factor in the right personnel, isn't it? You remember the suggestions for elders in the New Testament and deacons, that they be well thought of, that they be blameless in terms of their reputation. Very, very important to select those who are well reported of by believers. You know this is a pretty important step for Timothy. Verse 3, "Him with Paul would have to go forth with him." The last time Eunice and Lois saw Paul you know where he was? He was blood-soaked and he was lying on the city dump. He had just been stoned. And here he was saying, "I'd like to invite your son to come along on our missionary efforts. How about it, Mom?" That's quite a sacrifice, right? They don't know what's gonna happen but they let him go, and you know they had a little official meeting? They sure did.

1 Timothy 4:14 this gives us a little indication of that meeting. Paul says to Timothy, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given to thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbyters or the elders." In other words they had a little commissioning and they laid their hands on them. Here Paul was reminding Timothy not to forget that they had ordained them. Same things in 2 Timothy 1 verse 6 he says, "I want to put you in remembrance. Stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" so they had a little commissioning service ordaining him, laying hands

on him, praying for him, standing behind him, and they sent him out as a representative of the church right there in Lystra and Derbe, and the Lord had filled up the ranks of his team - Paul, Silas, Timothy.

This was a choice individually that they were going to take. Well it's beautiful to see how God works things out and Paul's relationship with Timothy was a wonderful one. Let me just take a footnote for a minute. Paul called Timothy, "My true child in the faith" verse Timothy 1:2. He called him "My son" he called him "my beloved and faithful child in the Lord" 1 Corinthians 4 and he called him "my beloved child" in 2 Timothy 1. Now many people for many years have read those and have said, "Now that means that Paul led Timothy to Christ" but you know something? You cannot find that in Scripture. Nowhere does it say that Paul led Timothy to Christ. You say, "But he calls him his spiritual son." Ah, but watch this beautiful fact. I just love this.

2 Timothy 1:5 he says, "I'm running to you, Timothy. I call to remembrance the unfaded faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother, Lois and your mother, Eunice and I am persuaded that it's also in you" which indicates that he really did not necessarily know about Timothy, all the facts. You know who I believe Paul led to Christ? Lois and Eunice the first time through. You know who I believe led Timothy to Christ? Lois and Eunice. So Timothy rather than being a first generation child in the faith or a second-generation child in the faith and beloved, that confirms strongly in my mind the priority of evangelism. Win somebody else who in turn will win somebody else. Paul comes back to Galatia. They've already done the job; they've already matured the saint to the point where he can join them on a missionary effort. Now that's evangelism.

Where you lead someone to Christ and then to such an extent are they strengthened that they can lead others to Christ and you in turn reap the benefits as that's evangelism, reproductive cycle. Effective evangelism then involves the right personnel and there they are, and God superintended it. Fourthly it involves the right precautions, and I'm just going to mention this briefly. Verse 3, "Paul had to go forth with him and took and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those quarters, for they all knew his father was a Greek." You know what? Some people have read this and Ramsey in his book just goes bananas at this point and accuses Paul of all kinds of things. He says, "Paul was a Judaizer here. Paul has fallen into the circumcision air. He was down there in Jerusalem and the circumcision came and said, 'Well you've got to be circumcised' and what does he do? He goes and circumcises some guy. That isn't necessary for salvation" but beloved, that isn't the point. It doesn't say he circumcised Timothy so he could get saved. It says he circumcised him because of what? The Jews in those quarters.

Now watch this. Timothy was a half-Jew and half-gentile. IF he was not circumcised the Jews would assume then that he had accepted his gentile identity. True? Because circumcision was the very mark of Judaism. So the Jew would've assumed that he accepted gentile characteristics, and so Paul recognizing that the key to reaching the Jewish people and that was the first place he went in every new town wasn't it, the Synagogue? The key was that Timothy had all this Jewish character. He had been brought up in a synagogue situation. All he needed to do was just get circumcised and he would have full entrance and full acceptance among the Jews and it wouldn't hinder his work among the gentiles. And so it was for expediency's sake; it was not for salvation's sake. It was just to allow the ministry to function more smoothly.

Now you watch what Paul said. In 1 Corinthians 9 he said this, "To the Jews I became as a Jew. To those that are under the law as under the law though I myself am not under the law." He says, "I

become all things to all men that" what? "That by any means I might win some." Now that's 1 Corinthians 9:19-20 and following. Paul is looking at expediency. Now let me give you another footnote. Titus came along and Paul forbid Titus to be circumcised. Absolutely no, and some people are confused why he let Timothy get circumcised and not Titus simple answer. Titus was a gentile. To circumcise a gentile would then have been to impose legalism but to circumcise a Jew already a Jew was simply to allow him the liberty to be more effective. He would've been wrong to circumcise Titus. He would've been wrong not to circumcise Timothy for the sake of effectiveness.

So you see, the right precautions. You say, "Well what's the point in missions?" The point is this. In every kind of missionary endeavor we need to be very careful that we acknowledge certain priorities in terms of being careful about things. Every culture has its own uniqueness and any missionary who goes into any culture; any evangelist who goes into any situation must understand that there are characteristics about that situation which he has to be aware of. There needs to be precaution, and best of all it is saying to us we need to be sensitive to people so we can adapt to the most advantageous approach in evangelism, the right precautions.

What is effective here might not be as effective over here if you were to adjust a little bit, to approach every man at that place where that man is. If you're going to witness to Jews you're going to need to know be able to know a little bit about Judaism. If you're going to witness to somebody who's in the Roman Catholic church you ought to be able to know a little bit about them so that you can approach them on a tactful basis and the same is true with other religions and other systems of religion and so forth. If you're gonna talk to a man who happens to be a fanatic on this and this, maybe if you know a little about what he knows about you can gain an entrance into his heart.

In addition to these other features another thing, that evangelism is founded on the right presentation. What was their evangelism? Verse 4. "As they went through the cities they delivered them the decrees." What decrees? The decision of the Jerusalem Council, and what did they decide? Go back to verse 11, chapter 15. Here's their message. "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved." That was their message wasn't it? Salvation by grace through faith, but there was something else to it. Oh yes. You remember they had said, "We want to add this, that you abstain from blood and things strangled and fornication and things offered to idols." Why? So you don't offend.

What is the message of Christianity, beloved? Two fold. 1. Salvation by grace 2. Living my love. Got it? You're saved by grace. Does that mean you stomp over everybody else? The royal law of liberty is the law of love. That's what they preached. They preached you're saved by grace and you live by love. That's the right message, friends. That's the right message. They gave it. The result? The churches were established in the faith and they increased in number daily.

Let me add a thought here. They again were busy building up the churches. Again they saw the priority for evangelism. Notice this, they increased in number daily. Some people have a problem with number. Of course some churches have gone crazy on trying to get more people more people more people all the time now but you know I think growth in numbers is good. It's Biblical. You often hear somebody say, "Well we're small. We must be right. God has always said it's the narrow way and the few there be." Yes, but your few and God's few may have no relationship. People say, "Our cross. We must be right because when all of the folks agree you must be wrong." Ridiculous.

Beloved, strong churches established in the faith will reproduce in number. That is true. Now if all

you're doing is running around trying to get more and more people you've got it backwards, and if you're trying to build up the saints you've got it on the right side. They'll reproduce and the church will increase in number daily. You know what Paul wanted to do? He wanted to win as many people as he could to Christ. You know how to do that? Get a few productive Christians and you add them to the church every day. Tremendous. The right message was preached and there were a lot of people preaching it and the church was growing.

Lastly, the right passion, the right priority, the right personnel, the right precautions, the right presentation need to be done, lastly, in the right place. Absolutely fantastic. I left the map up because I want to show you something that is so exciting. Now look at verse 6. "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia" now notice they've gone through Cilicia through the Cilician gates. They just kind of slid right in here. Here's Derbe, Iconium, Antioch and Lystra, this little section in here. You perhaps can't read it all. This is all part of Galatia. Galatia was a whole large area. The red line represents the Roman Empire, the blue the water areas, but here in this great section here, Galatia was a large province. Now they had gone all in this area preaching and confirming and strengthening the saints and now it was time to move west, see? So Paul thought wow, you know what's next? Asia. Asia Minor, this area right here. You know what the cities were in Asia Minor? Ephesus, Smyrna, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Collosae, Sardis, Pergamus, Thyatira. Wow. Just think of it! "Lord, we're going to Asia Minor", and they start to move "and God drops a concrete wall" verse 6. They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia. They started to go west and whammo, so what happened? The Holy Spirit slid them up and the trail must've been like this. See? He slid them up and they thought well, maybe north. Maybe the Holy Spirit is telling us north.

You know something? They never stopped. They never stopped. Just because this was closed they didn't stop. They just slid around it. They thought, "Well we'll go north." Look at verse 7. "They came to Mysia." Mysia is a little region right up here between Asia and Bithynia. It's actually in a part of Asia but the very north part and they couldn't preach, and in verse 7, "They attempted to go to Bithynia and maybe God wants us to go north." They can't go east, they've been there, and in the south is water. So north, Bithynia, but you know what? It says in verse 7, "The Spirit allowed them not. You cannot go to Bithynia." Well what are you gonna do? You can't go south, you can't go north. Here they are walking a thin line. You say all the doors are closed. South is water, east we've been, north we can't go, west we can't go. We might as well fold up and go home. But you don't know Paul.

He still had a corridor here, and so he just wiggled between Bithynia and Asia and he kept going and going and going. Finally he got a little place over here. You know what the name of it is? Troas. You know why he stopped there? Because the next step was the Aegean Sea. He couldn't take another step. He stopped. He got all the way to the water, "Well, Lord, you forced us into this little channel and we've been wiggling along between these two deals. Here we are at Troas" verse 8, "They passing by Mysia came to Troas."

You know, beloved, one of the great ways to know the will of God in your life? Just keep moving. You'll sit around, "I don't know what to do. God hasn't shown me." Just get up and do anything! Just do anything in His service and He'll move you where He wants you to be. Read my book on the will of God. It's all in there. Verse 9, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night and there stood a man of Macedonia." Macedonia was across the Aegean Sea. You know what great cities were there? Philippi, _____, Corinth and Athens. Oh, and this was pure Europe. No longer was Christianity going to be an Asian cult. It was going to reach Europe. Fabulous. And a man of Macedonia vision says,

"Come over to Macedonia." You want to know something? God wanted them in Macedonia but he never told them until they couldn't take one more step. You want to know how to live by faith? That's how. Just keep pushing and pushing and pushing until you finally hit a dead end and then God will open the door so wide you won't know what hit you, and you think Paul hesitated? Verse 10, "After he had seen the vision immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel to them."

Friends, a great way to know you where God wants you to work, just start going any old direction and watch Him close doors and just keep pressing on until you find an open one. So many times the will of God is like that thing at the amusement park with all the mirrors. You keep smashing into things and finally there's an open one and you go through it but you know it takes persistence, doesn't it? Well I close by repeating what I want you to remember. God uses those who have the right passion for the right priority with the right personnel taking the right precaution to make the right presentation and they submissively keep following until they get to the right place and evangelism starts with those basics. Let's pray.

Father, we're grateful this morning that you have given us clear teaching in the Word by the example of these men and we have seen the character of their lives. Oh God, we pray that we might see reproduced in our own lives this same kind of persistence, this same kind of commitment to basic principles that are timeless and changeless, and that from there our evangelism shall move out to reach the world. God help us to be disciplers of others who will reproduce. To the glory of God and Christ we pray. Amen.

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