

## 56. The Lord Spread the Gospel to Europe

In our last topic, we saw that we want to equip our physical and spiritual children so that they can teach clearly the decision of the Jerusalem Council. In our topic today, we see that Paul and Silas were traveling through the area of Galatia and explaining the decision of the Jerusalem Council to the churches that had been established in that region. As they traveled through this area, we are going to see that the Lord led them to add Timothy to the team when they came to the area of Lystra and Derbe.

In Acts 16:1-3, we read, “Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, *the* son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.” In these verses, we see that Timothy joined the team with Paul and Silas.

Paul and Silas were delivering the message that said that Gentiles were not under the law and did not need to be circumcised. However, Timothy had a Jewish mother and a Greek father. In addition, we have no evidence that his father had become a Christian. 2 Timothy 1:5-6 says, “When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” These verses only mention the faith of Timothy, his mother and his grandmother.

Timothy had already been having a real ministry for the Lord. We see that he was known by the other Christians in Lystra and Iconium in addition to the Christians in Derbe. The distance between the cities of Derbe and Iconium was more than forty miles. The fact that Timothy already had a good report in these other cities meant that he was busy serving the Lord. However, the Jews also knew that his father was a Greek.

Paul and Silas were delivering the letter from the church in Jerusalem to both the Jews and the Gentiles regarding the fact that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised or keep the Jewish law. God had told Abraham in Genesis 17:13-14, ““He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”” Earlier, Paul had not circumcised Titus, because he was a Gentile – Galatians 2:1-3. Here, Paul does circumcise Timothy, because he was partly Jewish. Paul understood clearly that circumcision had nothing to do with salvation, but it was very important to the Jews because of the promises that God gave to the Jews.

Ephesians 2:13-18 says, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of

commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Paul realized the need to demonstrate this unity both to the Jews and to the Gentiles. Timothy provided an example of unity for the Jews while Titus provided an example for the Gentiles.

We see that Paul and Silas added Timothy to their team so that he could be prepared and equipped to carry on the ministry of expanding the Gospel to the end of the earth. Paul knew that the best way to train Timothy for expanded ministry was by example. Later, Paul showed that he trained the elders at Ephesus and other places this same way. Acts 20:20-21 says, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here, we see that Paul regularly trained future leaders to share the Gospel by taking them with him both publicly and in the homes of those who were not yet Christians.

Acts 16:4-5 says, “And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them 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.” In each city where Paul and Barnabas had established churches, Paul and Silas now were able to tell the people in these churches about the decision of the Jerusalem Council. Those Jews who had become Christians knew that they could continue to practice circumcision, because that was a part of their Jewish promises that related to the covenant given to Abraham. Those Gentiles who had become Christians knew that they did not need to be circumcised or keep the law because they were Gentiles and not under the covenant made with Abraham. They only needed to obey those things that God had taught Adam and Noah long before the call of Abraham. Both Jews and Gentiles could understand the fact that they had been made one through the cross of Christ.

We see that this message had a powerful impact. First, the churches were strengthened in their faith. Second, the churches now were multiplying so fast that they were increasing in number daily. Acts 9:31 says, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” In this verse, the churches multiplied in Judea, Galilee and Samaria. As the Gospel spread into Gentile areas, God caused this multiplication to increase so that the number of churches increased daily.

In fact, in Acts 16:6-10, we see that God showed Paul and the team that the Gospel was to spread to the continent of Europe. Those verses say, “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. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And 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 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.” Here, we see how the Lord led Paul and the team to

begin to spread the Gospel in Europe.

They completed their ministry of strengthening and encouraging the churches that had been established in Phrygia and Galatia. As they traveled west, the team wanted to go south into the Roman province of Asia. However, the Holy Spirit made it very clear that they were not to go into Asia at this time. On his next trip, Paul did spend three years in Ephesus which was the major city of Asia. Acts 19:8-10 says, “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” On that trip, the Gospel spread throughout the Roman province of Asia. The fact that the Holy Spirit prevented them from going to Asia at this time was to fulfill the plan of the Lord to spread the Gospel to Europe.

As they continued to travel west, we see that the team tried to go north into the region of Bithynia. Again, the Holy Spirit did not allow them to go north so they just continued to follow the road west until they came to the city of Troas. Here, we see the importance of learning to be led by the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:18 says, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” When we are led by the Spirit, we experience the peace of God in our lives. Paul later wrote in Philippians 4:6-7, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” When we are led by the Spirit, we will pray for guidance and the Holy Spirit will give us His peace. He will give us peace about what not to do and also peace about what He wants us to do.

They came to Troas, which was a city that had water on three sides. They either had to cross the water or turn back. There, the Holy Spirit gave Paul a vision during the night in which a man of Macedonia was begging them to come to Macedonia which was the land on the other side of the water which divided Asia and Europe. When Paul had seen the vision, immediately the team had peace that God was leading them to cross over to Macedonia.

We also see that there is a change by the writer from “they” to “we”. Since Luke is the writer of the book of Acts, Troas was the place where Luke joined the team. Here, we see another way that the Lord was leading them as He led them to expand the team. We want to help our physical and spiritual children also learn to be led by the Holy Spirit. We will help them learn to be led as we show them by our example the importance of praying about decisions until the Lord gives us His peace. Then, when He gives us His peace, we act on that peace and begin to do what the Lord is leading us to do or going where the Lord leads us to go. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example what it means to be led by the Holy Spirit.