



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?  
Wk. 47 Nothing but Opportunity  
By Pastor Jody May 08/20/2023**

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**Acts 14:8-21 ESV**

**Timothy Joins Paul and Silas**

**16** Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. <sup>2</sup>He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. <sup>3</sup>Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. <sup>4</sup>As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

**The Macedonian Call**

<sup>6</sup>And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. <sup>7</sup>And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. <sup>8</sup>So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. <sup>9</sup>And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." <sup>10</sup>And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

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**[REVIEW / INTRODUCTION]**

Well, we just got through a tense moment in the book of Acts not just for Paul but for the entire church as we know it. They had just faced their first theological debate, the first of many, and by God's good grace though they came through. The byproduct of this encounter was a greater relationship between the church in Jerusalem and in Antioch that now in joint effort, work towards the expansion of the gospel.

This past moment in Chapter 15 was brought to us by people who wanted to add to the Gospel, a works-based program, that is the Old Covenant and living by Mosaic law. They had wanted the new Christians to be circumcised in



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---

effect capturing people saved by Grace and chaining them to a religion that taught **worth by works**. They wanted to develop their own brand of **Christian Nationalism**, sorry had to throw that there but that was the gist of it. Making Christians succumb to nationalistic indoctrination into the Jewish culture. As we saw in vol. 1 of Luke, they couldn't make Jesus the physical Messiah for the world, that would elevate the Jews as the ruling elite, He wouldn't let them do that, so they went after Christianity to use Jesus' name to create a system to do so.

The church did prevail though in both Jerusalem and Antioch, as they clarified some essential beliefs: **don't eat food sacrificed to idols, and abstain from sexual immorality** / sex outside of marriage ([15:19-20](#)). What that was doing for the newly established Gentile church was giving them a way to practice being Holy, separating them from the world while living in it, without chaining them to the law. This also taught the church in Jerusalem you can keep practicing Mosaic customs, but it held no salvific purpose, as in Jesus fulfilled all the requirements. This one event in Acts 15 was clarifying and edifying for both churches in the end.

Now, this puts us though in this **crossroads** of an evangelistic mission.  
1<sup>st</sup> Paul is ready to go on a second missionary journey to strike while the *iron is hot*.  
2<sup>nd</sup> the newly started churches though needed to have explained to them that circumcision is not necessary, so essential doctrine must be clarified.  
3<sup>rd</sup> there needs to be a replacement in the missionary ranks since we just witnessed Paul and Barnabas in a sharp and public dispute/split.

On top of that, if you have been keeping track you would agree with me, **church planting isn't easy!** At this point in Acts we have had years of persecution in various forms: emotional harassment, doctrinal mismanagement by both Jerusalem and Antioch, governmental prosecution in multiple foreign cities under Roman governances, along with physical threats that have already resulted in pain and death for some. I got to tell you, if I was Paul, at these crossroads, I am thinking of early retirement. It seems for every step forward there is two steps back.



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---

But see that's why I am glad that God didn't put me in charge of such an important and wonderful thing as the birth of the church. Strife and hardship only makes it seem like you're going nowhere in life when in reality, strife and hardship is what makes forward momentum possible.

The Gospel is good news for it is fueled by difficulty not hampered by it, for God loves to display His power in the weakness of men. As Paul learned in multiple occasions - *For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* - **2 Cor 12:10 ESV**

It made me wonder this week how you are viewing life right now, are you the type of person that looks at a fork in the road, another roadblock and do you tire, do you give up and go back, or do you forge ahead. The Bible teaches us that when we are living for Christ, and we embrace our Gospel call (Mat 28: 16-20), that what we think is another waste of time, God sees it as the chosen path to produce praise on your lips, joy in the hearts of the lost, and angst among His enemies. What we see as hindrances, God sees as opportunities to exploit:

**MAIN POINT:** What looks like a Roadblock to man is nothing but opportunities for God.

**(The Gospel takes Roadblocks and makes opportunities.)**

What looks like the end of the road for us, is simply the on ramps to accomplishing the will of God. God is all about moving in ways that are not yet revealed to us, and in today's passage you are going to see that this sharp dispute, between Paul and Barnabas, was under the Providence of God, and from what seemed like the end of the line became multiple forks in the road to take the mission of the church to the next level. Today we are going to look at three different scenarios created by the closed door of that sharp disagreement and see how they all produced opportunities for church growth and expansion.

**[READ THE TEXT]**



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**[PRAY]**

**1. Spoiled Companionship Producing Solid Friendships (1-5).**

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**Timothy Joins Paul and Silas**

**16** Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named **Timothy**, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. <sup>2</sup>He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. <sup>3</sup>Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. <sup>4</sup>As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

Alright we see the first trade-off from this dispute. There was a spoiled companionship between Paul and Barnabas, but the direct result of that was the space and opportunity for **Timothy** to come into the life of Paul.

Timothy became a coworker with Paul for the sake of the Gospel. He served as Paul's representative to several churches like Corinth and Philippi and eventually became a Pastor of the church of Ephesus. He was also with Paul when he wrote many of his letters such as 2 Cor, Phil, Col, 1 & 2 Thess, and Philemon, it seems he was always there when Paul needed him.

Timothy was a **young man** and in the pages of scripture we see him being **coached real time** by Paul how to handle believers in spite of his youth (1 Tim). He also seemed to have had some type of chronic illness increasing his dependency on God (1 Tim), and Paul deeply cared for this man even calling him his son (2 Tim). It seems as great as Barnabas was, as strong as a gift as he was as an encourager to the church, Timothy was exactly what Paul needed for this next phase of his life.

Timothy's parents were most likely converts from Paul's first trip to Derbe and Lystra as we are told in 2 Tim 1:5 that Lois his grandmother and Eunice his



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---

mother were known to have “sincere faith”. These two ladies have led their son, in the faith, for it says Timothy is a disciple, so he is a believer of Christ, but he is also recognized as being Jewish, on his mother’s side.

This is bonus for Paul, here is a young man, that can witness to both the Jews and the Gentiles, he understands grace and the law, and he is trainable and will follow Paul’s leadership, unlike Barnabas. There’s just **one problem though, Paul wants him circumcised** and didn’t we just get done in chapter 15 saying that wasn’t necessary? So, is Paul becoming a hypocrite or is this something else? What in fact here we have the expansion of and evangelistic doctrine that Paul wrote out in a future letter.

**1 Corinthians 9:19-23 ESV**

<sup>19</sup>For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. <sup>20</sup>To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup>To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. <sup>23</sup>I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

Bottom line, Timothy and Paul took on the task of associating to both the Jews and Gentiles so that **they might save some**. Paul finally has the perfect counterbalance to himself. Paul was born a Jew and raised in the Greek world and could speak their language, but Timothy was born Greek and Jew and would be viewed as the missing link between Judaism and Christianity. His physical scarring would get them invited in the synagogues where Paul could point at Timothy and describe God’s will to save all nations. Timothy is the walking and talking representation of God making a **new race out of two**.

Replacing the **soiled relationship** and a potential roadblock in Paul’s life is this new **solid friendship** that now became the possibility for more invites in synagogues, more welcome in Gentile towns, more camaraderie for long



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travels, and more help all to share the Gospel. **What the world throws up as roadblocks remember God uses as opportunities to spread his fame.**

**[Illustration]** Let me remind you of a time when we were known as an A29 church... (Bufford 1x a month 100 + miles, liberal theological drift, and the ignorance of churches outside the urban context to establishing relationships with multiple local churches through WMBA, CAYA, & G3 that has opened up multiple doors to spread the Gospel) Instead of feeling lonely and isolated we have gone through a tremendous invigorating time. What first looked like a roadblock to our evangelistic endeavors was actually the opening of multiple paths and multiple friendships for the sake of the Gospel and the fame of Jesus.

## 2. Spiritual Discernment Producing Holy Spirit Reliance (6-7).

### The Macedonian Call

<sup>6</sup>And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. <sup>7</sup>And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

Paul has his buddy Silas, and he has Timothy so he must be excited now to get this new missional endeavor going. They are ready to pursue new ventures in new towns for Gospel proclamation, but they encounter a problem, **God is now the one that becomes the roadblock.** Here it says the HS won't even let them go into Northern Asia, there is a definite steering of direction by the hand of God. But that's ok for these Gospel workers know that the HS wants what they want; to make much of Christ, as Jesus told us before His ascension.





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---

**John 16:13-15 ESV**

<sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Just as it was with all Apostles and as it is with us, we all have to develop a sense of **Spiritual Discernment** which will result in **Spiritual Reliance** because the Spirit wants to ensure you **make much of Christ!** Here's how this happens though. These church fathers had been working for years, preaching and studying God's Word, they had surrendered to the call of ministry, and they spent time pursuing God through the practice of Christian disciplines like fasting/prayer. They were finely tuned to hear the Spirit.

The lesson here for us, is why I want us all walking in, listening to, and being obedient to the Spirit, here are some helpful tools.

**1<sup>st</sup> if you want to walk in the Spirit reliant on Him, then the way you hear Him is through the Word**, the more Bible you read the more of His words you hear from God. I frequently come across people who spend more time obeying impulses and less time reading scripture and believe that is following the Spirit, that isn't.

**2<sup>nd</sup> test out what you think God may be leading you to.**

**1 John 4:1 ESV**

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits** to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

**1 Thessalonians 5:21 ESV**

But **test everything; hold fast what is good.**

**1 John 4:2 ESV**

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that **confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh** is from God,



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**3<sup>rd</sup> talk to those that have been practicing walking by the Spirit**, which in our day and age is not the Pentecostal church. Talk to those people that do things by Faith, follow God's word, are obedient to His Word, have good families, and are producing fruit. Ask them to give you counsel and if they don't agree with you, swallow your pride, because if an older Christian is giving you counsel and you are not submitting to their HS gained wisdom then you are **most likely in sin**.

Roadblocks can sometimes be divinely given so we need to practice our spiritual discernment and we do that by God's Word and Spiritual counsel, and that practice will develop **an HS Reliance**.

### 3. Steady Patience Producing Ministry Opportunities (8-10).

<sup>8</sup>So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. <sup>9</sup>And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." <sup>10</sup>And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

So Paul, Silas, and Timothy are learning to be patient and wait on God, even when the pressure is on and strike while the iron is hot. They have gained a new solid friendship in Timothy who will be with them to the end, they have learned how to be HS reliant, which you see all through the rest of Acts and Paul's epistles, and now this **new way of looking at roadblocks** (Gospel views) will open doors for even more ministry opportunities.



According to F.F. Bruce it seems like Paul's aim would have been Ephesus. It was known as the gateway of the world going from the East to the West, but as we look at Paul's travel the Spirit bumps him north sends him around the





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---

Agean Sea and sets up ministry points before going back to Ephesus. It seems the HS has a strategy with how to go about with expansion and with whom.

Now this gets even more interesting because I wondered if you noticed something in the text today. God opens up another major opportunity and strengthens the fellowship of the Gospel one more time.

Look at v. 8 again –

<sup>8</sup>So, passing by Mysia, **they** went down to Troas.

Then jump to v. 10

<sup>10</sup>And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately **we** sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called **us** to preach the gospel to them.

God has led them through a long and difficult road, and in return they picked up the author of our letter, **Luke**. We have been reading this man's work since August 18, 2018 (5 yrs.) and we finally have caught up with him real time. Luke has now become part of the story that he has been telling. This is when he begins to compile his Gospel, this is when he begins to minister to Paul's abused body and mind, this is when he becomes his best friend that will stay with Paul till the end.

Through all of these roadblocks Paul may have lost Barnabas, but even then, Barnabas is ministering in Cyprus. But the **fork in the road was met with the supply of our God** and we gained Timothy, we gained Luke, and they traveled the second route, establishing churches to which Ephesus would send people to, the Spirit had the foresight to set up a supply chain. God had established the supply lines before ever setting up the base, and he blessed us with the men that made Paul's life possible!

**[CHALLENGE]**

Family you may have encountered yourself some spoiled relationships. You have people that at one time were important in your life, that perhaps offered good counsel, that even filled a special place in your heart. But it became evident that God was separating you from them. Today maybe what you need



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---

to do is accept that Truth, that for God's people, He's always working a way in which you will never walk your path alone. This is why the church is **so important**.

Here in this church, you may even meet your Timothy.

In the church is where is where our children meet other adults that will help direct them in the years to come and say things to our kids when they turn a deaf ear to you.

In the church on mission is where you find people with similarities in passion and gifting, and perhaps your calling will become a shared one with a best friend that you have not realized yet.

BUT perhaps, and this is a BIG one for all of us, we all need to **stop looking at the church** as if all these people are here to help me get what I want and perhaps embrace humility and believe I am here to help someone else.

**Fulfillment in your life comes by what you give not by what you take**, who are you blessing by being a friend to them in here?

Today, family you might be the person that needs to understand the **leading of the Spirit better** well let's start at square one, are you reading His Word daily? Step 2 are you talking to others about what you are reading, so you are not reading in the echo chamber of your own mind? Step 3 is there someone holding you accountable to what you think you should do for Christ? HS reliance usually comes through the acceptance of a HS calling, have you accepted the fact you were made for God's glory to make a disciple yourself?

Lastly, perhaps you are **not the most patient person** in the room? You have tried to trudge ahead when perhaps God is calling you to wait, perhaps you need to talk to others about the big picture that you think God has you involved in. Like Luke, it is time to write your story into the life of this church, are you ready for that?

Maybe you are listening to all of this and wondering how do I get in on this action, how do I become a part of a story where men walk with God, hear Him clearly, and follow His mission? **You have to come through Christ friend.**



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---

You have to lay down your impulse to tell Him “No” and let Him control your life, the Spirit of Jesus calls all to Repent of your sins and put Faith in Him for Salvation, believing in His life, death, and resurrection to be saved. If that’s you don’t delay you come to Him today, and be a part of this story as well.

**[PRAYER]**

**[COMMUNION]**

**[BENEDICTION]**

Go in the name of the Father, that has sovereignly ordained our roadblocks so that He may reveal His glory in His chosen paths.

Go in the name of the Son, that opened the way for Salvation, paying the price for our sins, ensuring we will never be blocked from the Father again.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that we hear through the Word, we see at work in our lives, and who confers His presence through the witness of others in this church.