

God Blesses through Messes

Acts 15.36 – 16.10

Luke's record of ADVANCE of Early Church NOT Fairy Tale or SPIN Job

HONEST Record – Portrait like O. Cromwell said showing “Warts and All”

2 Heroes of 1<sup>st</sup> M Journey – Seen them Stand SHOULDER to Shoulder as ONE

Preaching Christ – Planting Churches – Standing against Heresy – Valiantly!

Now see them TOE to Toe – SHARPLY DISAGREEING! – and Separating!

Family Sunday – Our kids seen Loving Parents – Sharply Disagree a Time or 2

Acts NOT **People** mag. – Testimony of Jesus – Chief Missioner – Sovereign, Savior

None of us would be here today if NOT True: God Blesses through Messes!

## 1. Great Plans

### a. Strengthen the Believers

v. 36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."

Impt. Church Leaders visit Churches in Africa – Big Event – Chickens Killed!

Several of our Skinny Students of 20 years ago – NOW Overweight BISHOPS!

P & B wanted MORE than just TASTY Chicken DINNERS – Accolades!

v. 41 ...strengthening the churches

Luke's Favorite Description of BLESSING brought to BELIEVERS

### SUMMARY of VICTORY LAP of 1<sup>st</sup> M Journey

Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. Acts 14.21,22

After INTENSE Meeting about NATURE of Salvation ch 15 – Blessing Extended

Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. Acts 15.32

2<sup>nd</sup> M Journey SAME Good Effect:

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

STRENGTHENING ('consolidating' J.B. Philips) – Edify, Build Up, Advance

Start of 2<sup>nd</sup> M Journey LESS DRAMATIC – Not Called by H.S. in Worship ch 13

The reason Paul and Barnabas did not receive a second calling of the Holy Spirit at this point is that they did not need one. They had been called to be missionaries, and once a person is called to a task, he or she does not need to be called again...

American Christians need a challenge of this kind. We think that if we agree to teach a Sunday school class for nine or ten months, we have done a great deal; we are then ready to have someone else do it... We need to see that when calls us to something it is for a lifetime – or at least until God himself clearly moves us in another direction.

James Boice

(Words of man called to pastor 1<sup>st</sup> church and served 32 years there until he died.)

## b. Stretch the Boundaries

Important DECISION of Ch 15 > REASON to Preach Gospel of Jesus to Gentiles

Wanted to ENCOURAGE existing Churches & EVANGELIZE where No Churches

vs. 9,10 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.



ASIAN / AFRICAN Christian Church is NOW Going EURO Too!

M Team will cross Waters from Continent of Asia to Continent of Europe

2<sup>nd</sup> Journey – Much FURTHER and FARTHER than 1<sup>st</sup> M Journey

Major Cities: Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus

And they stayed there a long time with the disciples. Acts 14.28

NOT Sure how LONG Paul & Barnabas RESTED in Antioch

1<sup>st</sup> M Journey about ONE YEAR – Likely WINTERED in Antioch

v. 36 Some time later... / BATTERIES Fully Charged – Energizer Bunnies Ready!

Need to REST – 1<sup>st</sup> M Journey BUSY ONE YEAR – Now they're RECHARGED!

NO Biblical Examples of VACATION in the Modern Sense of Word > RETREAT!

Retirement: Change your tires and keep rolling on in Kingdom service. Yours Truly

TASK: Strengthening & Stretching / Edifying & Evangelizing REMAINS SAME!

## 2. Good People

Opinion of ENTIRE Church: ...our dear friends Barnabas and Paul -- men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 15.25,26

TEXT of Letter – ENDORSED BY and SENT TO Entire Church – True Heroes!

a. Particulars – both M’s EMBRACE Same BIG PLAN – DEVIL is in DETAILS

Most American Politicians want STRONG DOLLAR – Many Opinions HOW TO

vs. 37,38 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him

Paul’s NEGATIVE Reaction was IMMEDIATE and ADAMANT

From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where *John left them to return to Jerusalem.* Acts 13.13

BLAND & COLORLESS Description of this PERSONNEL Change 1<sup>st</sup> M Journey “WHY” – John Mark took ANOTHER Ship in DIFFERENT DIRECTION

v. 38 ...because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.

DESERTED = APOSTASY thus DISQUALIFIED from him Trusting in Ministry

Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. Luke 8.13

Full DISCLOSURE: ...Mark, the cousin of Barnabas Colossians 4.10 NEPHEW? BLOOD Lines NOT Mentioned by Luke – Probably NOT Reason for DISPUTE

Luke is a truly catholic writer; he knows that there are various strands in primitive Christianity, and he weaves them together in the interest of Christian unity – a cause obviously dear to his heart. F.F. Bruce

b. Personalities

?That Winter Barnabas got copy GALATIANS & Did NOT LIKE what he READ:

The other Jews joined him (Peter) in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy *even Barnabas was led astray*. ..I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel... Galatians 2.13,14

UNDERLYING TENSIONS? – Big-Mouthed Paul had IDEA of Mission First?

Great TEAM – Barnabas – PEOPLE Person / Paul – Man of Strict PRINCIPLE

I am rough, boisterous, stormy, and altogether war-like, fighting against innumerable monsters and devils. I am born for the removing of stumps and stones, cutting away thistles and thorns, and clearing wild forests. Martin Luther

Our JUDGMENT sides with PAUL / Our HEARTS side with BARNABAS

PAUL not have PATIENCE to deal with FALLEN NOVICE on Grueling Mission

BARNABAS sees POTENTIAL in Young Cousin, WILLING to Give Another Try

Paul looked at people and asked, ‘What can they do for God’s work?’ while Barnabas looked at people and asked, ‘What can God’s work do for them?’ Both questions are important to the Lord’s work, and sometimes it is difficult to keep things balanced. Warren Wiersbe

c. Parting v. 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.

UNITY Achieved ch 6 – Widows Food Distribution / Greater Unity in Chapter 15

2 Men – Just helped UNIFY Entire Church – Have PAINFUL SEPARATION

...this melancholy disagreement... John Calvin

Sharp Disagreement = PAROXYSM > Violent Explosion or Emotion

?NO REF. to SPIRIT of God LEADING > No Sanctification of their STRUGGLE

Our commitment is to the truth, and if God has chosen not to show something clearly to us, we should not be afraid of being tentative in our understandings on that issue. Ajith Fernando

Luke NOT Analyze all the STOOL SAMPLES of this Big Mess – SAD Fact

Ch 15 – SANITIZED description of CHURCH CONFLICT – Emph. UNITY

Thank God > GOOD RESULT – Luke CHARITABLY SILENT about PAINS

Here MASK LIFTED SLIGHTLY – Still VERY DISCREETLY – No Accusation

### 3. Gracious Providence

...this example of God's providence may not be used as an excuse for Christian quarrelling.

John Stott

a. Two Teams God changes His WORKMEN but the WORK carries on!

vs. 39,40 Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

God OVERRULED Disagreement for GOOD > TWO Mission Trips LAUNCHED

Here is an example where disagreement was so great that the ability to work side by side was affected. What resulted was a solution that allowed the advance of the gospel to continue, but in a way that recognized a need for distinct ministries. Sometimes this is the best solution.

Darrell Bock

LAST Ref. Barnabas in Acts – TRAD. says Stayed CYPRUS Died an OLD MAN

Luke NOT Saying Barnabas & Mark were NOT Commended by Brothers

SELECTIVE History - Paul CENTER Stage rest of Acts - Real HERO is JESUS

Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

2 Corinthians 3.5

Paul's NEW Mission COLLEAGUE > SILAS or SILVANUS

Judas...and Silas, two men who were *leaders among the brothers*. Acts 15.22

Judas and Silas, who themselves were *prophets*, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. Acts 15.32

LIKE Paul - a ROMAN CITIZEN

But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens..." Acts 16.37

With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly... 1 Peter 5.12

SCRIBE and PARTNER in Ministry with PETER

AWKWARD Moments when New Believers from 1<sup>st</sup> M asked 'Where is P or B?'

Without justifying either disputant, Luke shows how the sovereign God advances his kingdom through his flawed servants... That God uses sinful servants never excuses our sin, but it always glorifies his grace. Dennis Johnson

vs. 4,5 As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

b. Timothy – New APPRENTICE in place of JOHN-MARK

v. 1 He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek.

Tim AND Mom & Granny probably CONVERTED to Jesus on 1<sup>st</sup> M Journey  
LYSTRA – Village of Illiterate Pagans that 1<sup>st</sup> Sacrificed, then STONED Paul  
Mom & Granny laid FOUNDATION of Salvation / Paul FINISHED the Work  
Which God had ORDAINED from before the CREATION of the World

Timothy my true son in the faith 1 Timothy 1.2

Will be Paul's MOST TRUSTED Colleague for Next 15 Years

Timothy...I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.

For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. Philippians 2.19-22

1) Unique – “Timothy...I have no one else like him”

Not Same Personality and Gifts as Paul / Barnabas was good COMPLIMENT

DIFFERENCES in Personality and Gifts – Made a GOOD TEAM

Timothy was PASTOR – Paul was EVANGELIST

v. 2 The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.

UNIQUE – Out of ALL in Lystra T. is MENTIONED and ORDAINED

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. 1 Timothy 4.14

v. 3 for they all knew that his father was a Greek

Being ½ Jew & ½ Gentile Timothy could BRIDGE Both Cultures

2) Concerned for Others –

...takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. Philippians 2.20,21

Rare to put others interests before Own: True of People, Churches, Cities, Nations

City of Wenzhou: Train Wreck – 1000’s Came to Help, Gave Blood, Care Strangers

Going for lunch afterwards? Probably another hungry, maybe lonely, person here!

3) Worked Well with Others – Team player, not a Lone Ranger

Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. Philippians 2.22

2 of Paul's 13 Letters Addressed to Timothy – 6 Other Letters Sent with him

Paul trusted him to OVERSEE Churches he had FOUNDED

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.  
1 Timothy 5.1,2

4) Promoted the Interests of Jesus Christ – NON-Christians Kind & Helpful

For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. Philippians 2.21

TIMOTHY saw TEMPORAL and ETERNAL Needs of a Person

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

1 Timothy 4.12,13

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

Very CHINESE Conversation: PRIVATE PARTS, Big Nose! So Fat! Circumcised?

MOTHER was Jew > CONSIDERED a JEW, EXPECTED Covenant Requirement

TITUS – 2 Gentile Parents – was NOT Circumcised – NOT Necessary

Just as Gentiles need not become Jews, so Jews do not have to act like Gentiles to belong to Jesus the Messiah.  
Dennis Johnson

Circumcision – Neutral Issue – Would NEITHER Save or Keep from being Saved

NOT for Timothy's SALVATION – but as STRATEGY to Reach Jews

// Do NOT NEED Theological DEGREE to BELONG to Church

Should HAVE a Theological Degree to LEAD the Church

Last Sunday – Preached on Freedom in Salvation in Christ – Not by Works

Freedom includes Nice Cold Beer – Lunch: Hot, Tired, 5 RMB for Cold Beer!

20 Others from ZGC – Various Opinions on FREEDOM on BEER > Cold COKE!

Just because we HAVE Freedoms – Not always WISE to Use Them

Age NO PAIN Killers & PENICILIN –C. NOT Easiest way to Reach MEN for God

Sometimes we must DO VERY PAINFUL Things to ADVANCE Cause of Christ

He circumcised that he might take away circumcision.

Chrysostom

### c. Trek

vs. 6-8 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.



They had come a long way, in fact all the way from the south-east to the north-west extremities of Asia Minor, and by a strangely circuitous route. They must have been in a state of considerable perplexity, wondering what God's plan and purpose were, for so far their guidance had been almost entirely negative. John Stott

EVEN Apostles do NOT ALWAYS have CLEAR SENSE of God's LEADING

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now)... Romans 1.13

PROBABLY wanted to GO WEST - CAPITAL City of Roman Asia

World Famous EPHESUS – Strategic Location for Gospel

What EXACTLY was the MEDIA of Communication from the Holy Spirit?

SILAS was a PROPHET – Was he the messenger?

We need to understand that ‘closed doors,’ though they are a type of negative guidance, are nevertheless true guidance... When God closes doors it is not because he has nothing for us to do. He does not want us to take a vacation. It is to keep us from getting into a work to which we are not called in order that we might be saved for a work to which we are.  
James Boice

CLOSED Door to Paul – NOT MEAN Closed FOREVER

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia... 1 Peter 1.1

For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. Galatians 2.8

As we mature in the Christian life it often seems more opaque. I think it is because he expects us to make our own decisions in the light of the inner maturing, which the Holy Spirit has been working in us...in the Acts we see God guiding both by natural, rational means...and by supernatural means such as visions and dreams. We would be wise not to write either of them off.  
Michael Green

v. 9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Authentic turning points in history are few, but surely among them that of the Macedonian vision ranks high.  
Richard Longenecker

Paul MIGHT have Wondered ‘WHY NOW’– Could have used this Guy EARLIER!

NOT TOLD how long Paul and Silas WAITED for this Guidance

v. 10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

MAN? – Luke himself? – 1<sup>st</sup> of 4 ‘WE’ sections of Narrative – LUKE is With Paul  
 Did DR. LUKE join the Team because of PAUL’S MEDICAL NEEDS?  
 CONCLUDING – They TALKED (and Prayed?) even with the VISION

Nothing makes a man strong like a call for help. George MacDonald

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open... See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut."  
Revelation 3.7,8

I cannot say for sure that ‘teaching here in this college IS God’s will for me.’ But I can say that God is pleased with me as I teach here. Prof. C.W. Anderson

FORBIDDEN to go ONE Direction BUT INVITED by God to go ANOTHER

David Livingstone tried to go to CHINA – but God sent him to AFRICA

William Carey planned to go to POLYNESIA – but God sent him to INDIA

Adoniram Judson went first to INDIA – but was driven on to BURMA

We need to trust him for guidance and rejoice equally in restraints and constraints.  
A.T. Pierson

#### d. Trust Restored

Paul later Mentions Barnabas with RESPECT and ADMIRATION

Is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?  
1 Corinthians 9.6,7

MAYBE 1 Reason they could RECONCILE Later: NO Email Yet

INTERNET – Great TOOL for INFORMATION / Not for ARBITRATION

A Lie has raced all the way round the world while the Truth is still lacing up his boots.  
Mark Twain

Mark EVENTUALLY was RESTORED to Paul’s CONFIDENCE

My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him)... my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, and they have proved a comfort to me. Colossians 4.10,11

Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. 2 Timothy 4.11

She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. 1 Peter 5.13

As a member of three intersecting circles in the early church, he (Mark) provides an important link between Barnabas, Peter, and Paul. F.F. Bruce

GOSPEL of Mark > Memoirs of PETER > MISTAKES, FAILURES of Disciples

GRACE of God in JESUS for FOLLOWERS who FALL

GOD'S BEST – FORGIVING LOVE but God Blesses some Messes  
 ENTRUSTED to us PRICELESS TREASURE of Good News of Jesus  
 Son of God – Savior who died for Sinners – Sovereign over Sin, Grave, Hell  
 TREASURE!! Amazing News of FORGIVENESS, LIFE, HOPE, HEAVEN!

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 2 Corinthians 4.7

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Acts 15.36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." 37. Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38. but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. 39. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, 40. but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. 41. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Acts 16.1. He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek.

2. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. 3. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4. As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. 5. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers. 6. Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. 7. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. 8. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. 9. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10. After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.