



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Study 24: **PROGRESS IN CHURCH MINISTRY AND EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH** Acts 16:1-40

Paul's commitment to Christ and His commission was unique and enduring. The priority of his life was obedience to the heavenly vision. While he lived on planet earth, his only reason for existence was to go where Christ would have gone, do what Christ would have done, preach what Christ would have preached and reach as many souls as possible for Christ. He had a great concern for the growth and establishment of the converts of their first missionary journey. He told Barnabas, his Spirit-chosen fellow-labourer in ministry that it was necessary for both of them to **"go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do"**. The 'follow-up' of our evangelistic outreach is needful if our work for Christ is to abide and stand the test of time. Barnabas determined to take John Mark along. Paul thought otherwise because Mark had proved unfaithful (Acts 13:13). Paul insisted that it was not wise to put **"confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble"** (Proverbs 25:19). Barnabas was more committed to **"strengthening the weak, feeble and fearful"** Mark (Isaiah 35:3,4). The disagreement put asunder the two companions who God had joined together. Who was right? Who was wrong? That is not the important thing. Christ's message to us is: **"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man (Mark or Miriam) put asunder"** (Matthew 19:6).

SCRIPTURAL DECLARATION BY THE APPOINTED MINISTERS

Acts 16:1-8; 15:40,41; Philippians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 9:19-22; Acts 15:22-29; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 3:10,11; Galatians 1:6-12; Acts 20:20,21,26-28,32; 16:6-8; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16,18; Romans 1:14-16.

The new ministerial team was made up of Paul, Silas and Timothy (Acts 15:40,41; 16:5). Barnabas and Mark were later reconciled, restored and reabsorbed (1 Corinthians 9:6-12; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11). As Paul and his companions visited the churches, they preached the full gospel and declared the whole counsel of God. The message of Acts 15:28,29, written to the Gentiles, was only to resolve the controversy on circumcision. It was not the full gospel, it was not the whole counsel of God. To be saved and to keep saved, the Gentiles must repent, turn away from all their sins (Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30) and believe on Christ as their Saviour and Lord (Acts 16:30-32; 20:20,21; Romans 10:9,10).

The missionary strategy of the Apostles was guided, directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was actively resident in the ministers; He released and restrained them, He instructed and inspired them, He opened hearts and closed doors, He prompted as well as prevented them. In places where the people were not ready for the gospel, they **"were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia"** (Acts 16:6). Later, when the people became ready and willing, the ministers went by the leading of the Holy Spirit and **"all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks"** (Acts 19:10). The Apostles were not ignorant or immature in spiritual things; they knew the difference between the restraint of the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6,7), the reaction of a hateful society (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16) and the restriction of a hindering Satan (1 Thessalonians 2:18). The fearful, faithless soul interprets every problem as the restraining of the Spirit. He sees a roaring lion in every path of duty. The faithful believer sees the open door of ministry in spite of many adversaries (1 Corinthians 16:8,9).

SACRIFICIAL DEVOTION TO THE ASSIGNED MISSION

Acts 16:9-24; 2:16-18; Mark 16:15-20; Ezekiel 3:17-22; Luke 9:2-6; Matthew 24:12-14; Acts 8:25,35,40; 14:21-25; 19:11-20; 1 John 4:4.

They had been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go south or north but they did not presume that the work had finished. They kept praying and were ready for more service and further instruction. Then came the Macedonian call: **"Come over into Macedonia, and help us."** Immediate obedience was their response to that call. **"Immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them"** (Acts 16:9,10). Paul and his team ministered and laboured as tireless ambassadors of Christ. Using the means of transportation available at that time, they went wherever people were willing, waiting and ready to hear the saving gospel. Their preaching of the word was confirmed with signs and wonders, healing, deliverance and miracles. They lived the life of Christ and did the works of Christ by the faith of Christ (Galatians 2:20). Jesus silenced demons that recognized Him and cast them out; so did Paul and so should we do.

SUPERNATURAL DEMONSTRATION IN THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

Acts 16:25-40; Matthew 5:10-12; 1 Peter 1:3-8; 4:12-16; 2 Chronicles 20:20-24; Acts 2:37-42; Romans 10:8-10,13; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 26:20; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:1-4,21.

The enemies of righteousness and the true gospel reacted against the good work of the Apostles with persecution. Paul and Silas were beaten, bound and imprisoned. Persecution did not intimidate, infuriate or incapacitate them. They prayed and sang praises to God. An unexpected, unprecedented, unrequested miracle happened. A great, unusual earthquake rocked the prison, yet the building was not demolished. All the prison doors were opened and everyone's bands were loosed, yet no single prisoner escaped. The Philippian jailor, trembling, asked what he would do to be saved. He believed on the Lord Jesus Christ with all his household and they were saved. The devil must have thought he had stopped the preaching, progress and propagation of the gospel when he raised persecution against Paul and Silas but God's work is unstoppable.

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He had wanted to kill himself to escape the judgment of the authorities (Acts 12:19). Seeing that he was saved from that earthly judgment, he realized the need to be saved from the eternal judgment. **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"** (Acts 16:30,31). The salvation of his household was not automatic. Everyone must individually repent and believe to be saved. **"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house."** All those who believed the word were saved. Their sins were forgiven, their hearts were changed and converted, their lives were transformed. **"And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes"** (Acts 16:33). **"And was baptized, he and all his, straightway."** He **"rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."** What a real difference genuine salvation makes in our lives!

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