

Unstoppable...Led by the Spirit and Fed by the Word

8/11/19 – Pastor Randy

This message has two “BIG” truths: We must be led by the Spirit and fed by the Word!

A. The Necessity of Being Led by the Spirit

Acts 16:4-10

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. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 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.” 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.

We have already read examples of God arranging appointments between those He called to be His witnesses and those who needed to hear the gospel. Luke records something happening on this journey that we don't find on their first journey; their mission was redirected by the Holy Spirit.

They initially went to the churches they planted during their first mission with the decisions from the apostles communicating that Gentiles did not need to convert to Judaism in order to be saved, they just needed to believe in Jesus. After that, they headed west but Luke tells us they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit from speaking the word where they headed. We don't know how they were forbidden. It could have been a prophetic word that they shouldn't preach, but we simply don't know. What we know is that they recognized the Holy Spirit as the source of the hindrance. Then they altered their course and headed north towards Bithynia, but the “Spirit of Jesus” did not allow them”. Again Luke does not tell us how the Spirit prevented them, just that He did. So now they altered their course again and headed west stopping in the city of Troas.

Unstoppable...Led by the Spirit and Fed by the Word

8/11/19 – Pastor Randy

Paul was sleeping and he had a dream of a man from Macedonia saying, "Come help us!" Paul concluded from this dream that their previous detours were the Holy Spirit's way of moving them to Macedonia, so the next morning they boarded a ship and headed to the city of Philippi in the district of Macedonia. Paul's practice was to go first to the Jewish synagogue in the city on the Sabbath and share the gospel to the Jews and God-seeking Gentiles who would be gathered to be taught from the scriptures. He did this because it would be the most likely place to find an audience that was open to hearing a message from the scriptures. But Philippi did not have a synagogue so they went to the riverside which would be a likely place to find Jews or Gentiles familiar with the Jewish scriptures gathered for worship. There they found a group of women gathered for prayer. They sat down with them and shared the gospel, and a woman by the name of Lydia embraced the good news about Jesus. She demonstrated her faith through baptism along with her whole household.

SO WHAT?

1. ***This is another conversion story*** in Acts, like the conversions stories of The Ethiopian official and Cornelius, ***reminding us that Jesus came to SEEK and to save***. In each of these stories we have individuals whose hearts were open to the truth, but they needed someone to tell them. In each of these stories God dramatically led his messengers to go out of their way in order to find the one who is lost but ready to receive. The Ethiopian and Cornelius were prominent men, but Lydia, a middle-class woman, would not have been considered very important. In Galatians, Paul wrote that in Christ, God has broken down the walls between Jew and Gentile and male and female. Man has a tendency to place individuals in classes, but the gospel levels the playing field. I've said it before and I will say it until my last breath: No one is above the need of God's grace and no one is beneath the offer of God's grace or beyond the reach of God's grace!!

2. ***This story reminds us of the necessity of being led by the Spirit.***

Being led by the Spirit does not mean that you need specific revelation from the Spirit for everything you do. You don't need to ask the Spirit to show you what roads to take to get to work tomorrow. You don't need the Spirit to

Unstoppable...Led by the Spirit and Fed by the Word

8/11/19 – Pastor Randy

provide specific revelation before you share your faith. In Acts 8 we read that when the Christians fled from Jerusalem due to the persecution led by Paul, they shared their faith wherever they went. Paul and his missionary companions made decisions about where to go and what to do according to what they knew Jesus would want them to do. It was their practice to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath in every city they arrived at. It was only when the Spirit interrupted their agenda that they bypassed this practice, bypassing some cities and heading to Philippi.

In Acts 11:29, when the disciples were made aware of an impending famine through a prophetic word here is what Luke tells us they did.

So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.

They decided to give an offering as a group and each one was instructed to decide what he/she could give. In 2 Corinthians 9:7, Paul challenged the church to give an offering, but he left it to them to decide how much to give. In 1 Corinthians when church members in conflict went to the secular courts for mediation, his criticism wasn't that they lacked special revelation from the Spirit. He said, "Isn't there anyone in all the church ***who is wise enough to decide these issues?***"

Everyday, the Lord expects you to make decisions influenced by the Spirit and consistent with the truth God has revealed to you through his word. In addition, in prayer we need to be in tune with the Spirit's voice so that we will hear and recognize when He is leading us with special revelation.

I was reflecting on the events of our mission trip and was reminded of how, when we pray and ask the Spirit to lead us, He leads us to the right place and the right people, at the right time. Our plans were originally to go to Haiti. Early this year Haiti began to experience severe political unrest. We were told that trips were canceled through May, but they were hoping things would be alright by the end of July. I hate changing plans due to "potential problems". I sent the news to Dave Biddle and Mary Santana and asked them to pray for wisdom. As I prayed the Lord brought Puerto Rico to mind. Here was my email with the COH Field Teams Director. The Spirit re-directed us to PR and we know that we were at the right place at the right time for the right

Unstoppable...Led by the Spirit and Fed by the Word

8/11/19 – Pastor Randy

people: People like Popola, and Jose, and Edwin, and Maria, and Hady, and Daniel, and Angel, and Roberto, and Cheo. Stories you will hear next week.

B. The Necessity of Being Informed by the Word

The second BIG truth for today is found throughout Acts 17 & 18.

Acts 17:2-3 (At Thessalonica)

And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."

Acts 17:10-11 (At Berea)

The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Acts 17:16-17 (At Athens)

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

Acts 18:4 (At Corinth)

"And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks."

18:11 - "And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."

18:24-28

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he wished to cross to

Unstoppable...Led by the Spirit and Fed by the Word

8/11/19 – Pastor Randy

*Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, **for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.***

SO WHAT?

There is one theme running through these chapters: The gospel message is about truth and reality. The Christian faith is not a message that serves as a coping mechanism for life's struggles and injustice. It is not mythical story, a metaphor, that gives life meaning. It is truth, and as Nancy Pearcey wrote, it is "total truth"; a worldview, an understanding of Who God is, who we are, where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going.

At Athens, Paul was grieved not because of any specific acts of injustice, oppression, immorality. His was deeply distressed due to the distorted perception of God. Their ignorance concerning the one true living God, evidenced by their altar inscribed with a confession that God was "unknown" to them, broke his heart and made him angry. As a result of their ignorance of the one true living God, they became worshippers of a multitude of gods shaped by their own imaginations, molded into idols with their own hands. And the consequences of living alienated from the truth about God are severe and eternal.

That is why Paul reasoned, explained, proved, and attempted to persuade. That is why the Bereans were commended for examining the scriptures to determine if what they heard was true. That is why Apollos received instruction, instructed others, and continued to receive more instruction. That is why Apollos is praised for powerfully refuting teaching that was not true! There is truth about life; that can be known, and must be learned.

Living faithfully as a Christian requires more than just knowing that Jesus died for your sins and rose again in victory over sin and death so that we can live eternally as the image bearers of God that originally created mankind to be.

There is a great deal of growth in understanding that must occur which requires a great deal of teaching and a great deal of learning. That is why Paul

Unstoppable...Led by the Spirit and Fed by the Word

8/11/19 – Pastor Randy

Barnabas, and Silas were not content to just plant churches and baptize believers. They understood the great commission called upon them to make disciples of all nations, baptizing new believers AND teaching those believers to obey all of Jesus instructions. That is why Paul stayed at Corinth for six months.

NOW WHAT?

In this digital age there are more resources than ever before at our disposal which aid our understanding of God's Word. But we have to take the time to read and study. The Spirit's job is to bring to remembrance all that Jesus taught us. He can only bring to your remembrance what you have committed yourself to learn. Knowing God requires that we set our minds to study. *Theology, the study of God, is commendable and constructive when it is pursued as a means of knowing God intimately, personally, and experientially. Theology only becomes corrupt when it is pursued as a means of merely knowing about God.*

In order to love my wife well, in order to love my sons well, it has been essential for me to learn about them. Knowing them relationally requires **more than** a factual knowledge about them, but not **less than!!**

David wrote, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" and "I have treasured your Word in my heart, so that I won't sin against you." Jesus said in order to be productive spiritually we must abide in him. He went on to say that those who abide in Him must have His words abiding in them! Jesus said if you want you want your life to be like a house built upon a solid foundation that withstands the storms of life, you have to both listen to and live according to His words. David tells us that the blessed man or woman is the one who delights in the word of the Lord and meditates on it. The NT authors use eating as a metaphor for meditating on scripture. Eat this book!!

You can't eat on Sunday only. You need to eat daily. You need to eat alone but you also need to be a part of a life group and eat together. Sign up today!

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