

PP Acts: To the End of the Earth

Part 43 Acts 16:1-5 *Multiplying*

4/30-5/1/2022

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went camping and they fell asleep for the night but just hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see." Watson replied, "I see millions of stars." "What does that tell you?" Watson pondered for a moment. "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets." "Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo." "Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three." "Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful and that we are small and insignificant." "Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow." Feeling impressed with himself, he asked, "What does it tell you, Holmes?" Holmes was silent for a minute, then said, "Watson, you dimwit, someone has stolen our tent!"

No one observes like the fictional Sherlock Holmes and it is a critical part of good Bible study. So let's observe well from our passage the ministry team of Paul, especially Timothy.

PP Observation

First, notice the pronoun *'they'* in **16:4, 6, 7, 8**, and then notice the shift to *'we'* in **16:10**. What we have here is Paul assembling his staff team so to speak and in **16:10**, Luke the author of Acts joins Paul's team, now writing from the first person. Luke, plus Paul and Silas (**15:40**) and a young man named Timothy, an awesome team! About 15 years after Acts 16, Paul wrote Timothy saying, **PP "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."** 1 Timothy 4:12

The Greek word for *'youth'* was for those below 40, 15 years earlier he would be in his 20's. His Greek name, *'Timotheos'* means *honoring God*. He grew up in Lystra, where Paul and Barnabas had started a church, and he came from an interracial marriage: his mom was Jewish and his father Greek. The imperfect tense of *'was a Greek'* implies that his father had died and wasn't a believer. Yet Timothy was, in no small part due to his mother's and grandmother's godly influence for they taught him the scriptures from when he was a little boy. He had developed a good reputation among the *'brothers'*. Age is no barrier to growing spiritually or doing great things for God!

But there was a problem with him joining Paul's team: *he had never been circumcised*. Circumcision was practiced by the Jews, and was done when babies were 8 days old. It was a sign of God's unique covenant with the Jewish people, and required of all Jewish boys. But some had come to believe that **PP "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."** Acts 15:1

Nowhere in the bible do we see that circumcision saved anyone, or else you could save yourself. The headquarters of the church in Jerusalem updated their Statement of Belief to stress this point: **PP "we believe that [Jews] will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as [Gentiles] will."** 15:11

But not all the church, and not all the Jewish people in the Roman Empire had gotten this memo. Which is one of the reasons for Paul's missionary trip: **PP "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.” 16:4

Paul knowing that the Greeks didn't practice circumcision, asked Timothy if he was
We are appalled at such an invasion of privacy, but it would be similar to asking another believer if they have been baptized, something we *should* be asking each other

But why did Paul have circumcised, and the answer is: **PP “because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”**

You see, Paul had a mindset that was being transferred into Timothy, and that was, **PP “I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.” 1 Cor. 9:22**

With that we can move to some **PP Application:** *What kind of character did Paul look for in his leadership team?*

PP a) Teachable

‘Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him’ 16:3

Paul choosing Timothy points us to the amazing, rich world of 1st century disciple-making
Jewish communities hired a school teacher who would become respectfully known as a rabbi, or a Torah teacher

Jewish boys and girls began their education at 4-5 years old, in a school called *Beth Sefer*, House of the Book, where they studied the Torah, the first 5 books of the bible

At age 10, the best of the male students went on to *Beth Talmud*, where they studied the prophets and the commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures, all while learning their father's trade

If a student was exceptional, then at ages 15-16, they entered *Beth Midrash*, House of Study and here is what is important for the statement in Acts 16:3

In *Beth Midrash*, the student would seek out a rabbi, and ask permission to study with him and become his disciple, or his talmid

Torah teachers almost never sought out their students, students would go to them and would undergo a test which was a rigorous interview

If the young talmid passed, he would leave home to live, travel and learn from the rabbi

Jesus shocked the Jewish rabbinical world by reversing the normal process of His day by taking the initiative to choose His disciples, His talmidim

And He didn't choose the smartest and most talented, He chose those who would be His disciples and do you know what a disciple means...a learner

Paul took young Timothy with him, and taught him to be a disciple of Jesus

PP b) Humble

Have you considered how amazing it was for Timothy to agree to get circumcised as an adult, for the sake of not offending the Jews?

Would you get tattoos removed if a group you were ministering to was offended by them?

Would you take your hat off in a building if you discovered it offended others?

Or agree to wear a T-shirt to cover up because you heard others with you were offended?

I was on a mission trip to Haiti in 1989 when it was told me that my long hair offended them and the trip leader asked me to cut it, right then and there...not an easy decision to agree to

The humility in Timothy takes us once again back to rabbinical discipleship, for the disciple was to have a total and complete submission to his rabbi

When a student became a disciple, he shifted allegiance to his rabbi, even over his father

All rabbis were Torah teachers, but some were elevated to 'Great ones' and when they were, they gained authority, s'mikhah, now able to make their own interpretations of the Law of God

Jesus had s'mikhah, saying to those wanting to be His disciples **PP "If anyone comes to Me and does not [love less] his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:26**

You see, the rabbi became the authority in the disciple's life, even replacing his father's and the rabbi's goal with his disciple was clear: **PP "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher." Luke 6:40**

Today, the goal of a student is to get a passing grade, but in rabbinical discipleship, the goal was to become like the rabbi in every way

Paul was well within his rights to expect Timothy to submit to his authority and be circumcised, and that submission is something very difficult for us to do today in America, isn't it?!

Clearly Paul has come alongside this young man, and is discipling him and it leads us to one aspect of the rabbi in the 1st century that we ought to know

PP c) Faithful

When a Torah teacher, a rabbi believed you were ready, you were released to become a teacher yourself and continue the process of making disciples of your rabbi

You were expected to do what Paul later told Timothy: **PP "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 1:13**

Jesus expected the same, **PP "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me" Matthew 11:29**

In rabbinical discipleship, the 'yoke' was the rabbi's body of teaching

When rabbis became *great ones* with s'mikhah, authority, they taught their yoke to their disciples

Paul said to Timothy, *I've taught you the gospel that I learned from Jesus now teach it to others*

Be faithful and do not deviate from it, but follow it as a pattern and teach it to others

One cannot help compare young Timothy to another young man, Mark, whom Paul wouldn't take on this missionary journey because he deserted him previously

Remember that the gospel would get hold of Mark and he would one day be an invaluable part of Paul's team, this was not that day

And Paul would taste again what it was like for people to painfully desert him in ministry

PP "For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica." 2 Timothy 4:10

Again, facing a Roman trial, **PP "At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!" 2 Timothy 4:16**

Friends, when the going gets tough, the unfaithful get going and stay gone

But not Timothy, for he was faithful, and became one of Paul's greatest ministry partners

Something you may not realize about Timothy is that he became one of the most influential church's pastor in the 1st Century, the church at Ephesus

Clues are there to reveal that Timothy was likely not the most confident pastor the world's seen

Just before Paul died, he said to Timothy, **PP “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”**

Remember Timothy, God has enabled you to pastor, it was confirmed when I anointed you, so don't give in to fear an anxiety and doubt

And for that nervous stomach of yours, PP “(No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.)” 1 Timothy 5:23

Yet despite these struggles, Timothy was faithful to the very end

According to Foxe's Book of Martyrs, that end came shortly after AD 95:

PP “as the pagans were about to celebrate a feast called Catagogion, Timothy, meeting the procession, severely reprovved them for their ridiculous idolatry, which so exasperated the people, that they fell upon him with their clubs, and beat him in so dreadful a manner, that he expired of the bruises two days after”

This was Timothy, a humble, teachable, faithful man, taught from a boy the Word of God, disciplined by Paul to become like his Great rabbi, Jesus

Friends, are you humble, faithful and teachable?

You won't be able to make disciples of Jesus if you do not learn to be, but if you do, Jesus your rabbi can use you more greatly than you could even imagine, even if you are young!

Pray