



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Great Lion of God, Acts 15:13 – 16:10

“Paul and the Second Missionary Journey, part I”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we turn to Thee with thanksgiving for Thy word and for the privilege of the study of it, and we pray Thy blessing upon us as we consider the things that are found in these chapters that describe the ministry of the Apostle Paul. We thank Thee for the faithfulness of that great apostle, for the things that we learn from the consideration of his life and ministry. And may, Lord, they have their true effects upon us. And we pray as a result of our study together that our thoughts of Thee may be more in harmony with Thy word.

And we would also bring to Thee [names redacted] and their family in the light of this terrible accident that has taken place. We pray that Thou wilt encourage and strengthen [name redacted] and enable him Lord to surmount the tragedy and the trial and the pain and the lossness that he feels over the loss of his little child. We commit [name redacted] to Thee. We pray Lord that Thou will strengthen her and encourage her. And we pray for Sam as he ministers to them. May it be to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are grateful to Thee for the promises of the word of God, and we know that in the experiences of life they sustain us, and we commit the family to Thee. We pray that all of their needs may be met in this time. And be with us Lord as we study tonight. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

[Message] We are turning tonight to Acts chapter 15 as we continue our study of the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. You may remember if you were here last week that we concluded with the account that is given of the first part of the so called Council at Jerusalem. The apostle and his company, after their first ambassadorial journey, their first missionary journey, which some of us studied in Sunday school, had returned to Antioch, the mother church of Gentile Christianity, and there they discovered that a snake had crawled into Eden. The way of salvation for the Gentiles had become an issue, and there were some in that unusual first church, which became so prominent for the spread of Gentile Christianity, who believed that it was not only necessary to believe in Christ in order to be saved, but also to undergo the rite of circumcision.

And so after a great deal of discussion, the church at Antioch decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem in order to inquire about the matter of salvation from the elders and the apostles who were in Jerusalem. So as a result Paul and Barnabas made their way from Antioch in Syria up to Jerusalem. Along the way, they spoke in the Christian gatherings that they had along the way of the way in which God had wonderfully begun to save the Gentiles. And they caused a great deal of joy to the brethren along the way. Well when they came to Jerusalem, as we studied last week, they had quite a time of discussion and debate, and finally after a great deal of discussion and debate, Peter stood up and seemed to give the sense of those who were there by saying,

“Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.”

Well you can see that Peter appeals to what happened in Cornelius's house, and he reminds them that those who were in Cornelius's house and heard his preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit fell on them before they were baptized, and circumcision was no issue what so ever. They're hearts were purified by faith. And so then the apostle asks of the gathering a question, “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples,” that is require them to be circumcised in order to be saved, “which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” For Peter senses, rightly, that if one submits to the rite of circumcision, in effect he has put himself under the whole of the Mosaic law, and putting himself under the whole of the Mosaic law brings him into all of the condemnation of the Mosaic law which was its intended function.

And then he gives what we said is a much truer Apostle's Creed than the historic Apostle's Creed, which arose at the earliest in the latter part of the 2nd century, long after the apostles had passed off the scene. No apostle ever knew anything about the Apostle's Creed, but this creed, in which Peter links others with himself has more claim to be an Apostle's Creed than the well known Apostle's Creed. In the 11th verse he says, “But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” And I commented last week that the way in which the apostle puts this is rather interesting because you would have expected him to say, “But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, they, (that is these Gentiles that we've been arguing over,) they shall be saved even as we are saved.” But he turns it around as if to suggest anyone who has any doubts about a Gentile being saved by faith alone, he's the person that we ought to be worried about because he doesn't understand truly grace.

So he says, “We believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we (we Jews) shall be saved, even as they.” No question about them, but there is a question about a person who wants to lay some kind of burden on a person who has already believed a legal burden. It's the same kind of doubt that you would have today about a

person who would say, “Yes, I’m a believer in Jesus Christ, but I think you ought to keep the law.” Well, a person who says, “I’m a believer in Jesus Christ, but I think you ought to keep the law,” is a person who doesn't understand fully the grace of God.

And I know you’re expecting me to say it so I’m going to go ahead and say it. The person who believes that you may be saved by faith in Jesus Christ through the exercise of your free will, then he doesn't understand fully the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. If he thinks he’s saved by what Christ did plus whatever was in him that caused him of his free will to receive Christ. Well you’ve heard me say that so many times I knew you’d be disappointed, you’d probably go out tonight, “Did you know he had an opportunity to talk about free will and he passed it up?” And I didn’t want to give you that pleasure so I went ahead and said it.

Now Paul and Barnabas, of course, didn't jump to conclusions and condemn Jerusalem. They went up for a talk, and what happened at Jerusalem as described in Acts 15 has been called by one commentator, “One of the ten decisive battles of Christianity.” Well Peter has spoken, and he has obviously spoken the mind of the group because there seems to be the general opinion that what he had said was correct, and so we read in Acts 15 verse 12, “Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.” And then after they had held their peace, James stood up.

Now remember James is the brother of our Lord. He later was known as James the Just. He was a Jew of the Jews, of course, being the brother of our Lord, being prominent now in the church at Jerusalem, saved after our Lord’s life. He is going to speak, and one there, I’m sure, must have wondered, “What is James going to say?” because we always think of James as being the leader of the group at Jerusalem, and the group at Jerusalem, well they would be the natural ones to be effected by attachment to the Law of Moses. So will James contradict what Peter says?

And so we read that James answered and said, “Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon (that’s Peter) hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.” Now he refers to what took place in Cornelius’s house because it was there that God opened the door to the Gentiles for salvation as Gentiles. And, he says, as a matter of fact, this is in harmony with the Old Testament, “To this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written.”

Now in the quotation that follows and I’m going to read through it, what James is trying to say is simply this, Gentile salvation was predicted in the Old Testament so we should not be surprised at what has happened. Of course when we look at it nineteen hundred years or so later, it’s a problem with us to understand why they had these difficulties because sometimes we fail to realize the Jewish background and the Hebrew origin of the Revelation of God, humanly speaking. Remember the Lord Jesus said, “Salvation was of the Jews.” And then also the Lord Jesus said he was not, “Sent but unto the lost sheep of Israel.” He sent out his apostles, and he said to them, “Don’t go in the way of the Gentiles, but go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” So, it was their intention to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. That was our Lord’s ministry. Paul, in Romans chapter 15 will say, “Jesus Christ was a ministry of the circumcision to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” So he came in fulfillment of the Old Testament promises and to make them good. And of course when he died on the cross the New Covenant was ratified in his blood. So the Lord Jesus’ ministry was a ministry directed to the nation Israel.

Now, of course we don’t have time to deal with all of these little side issues, but of course Gentiles were saved in the Old Testament because in the Abrahamic promises provision was made for them, but in their salvation they had to become Jews so they would become a member of the Jewish community. They would undergo circumcision and become a Jewish person because they were still living in the age of the law. The age of the law did not stop until the Day of Pentecost. So, until that time then of course, or

shall I say the cross work of the Lord Jesus since the veil of the temple was rent in twain then and on the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit, came the power for this particular age. So until the time of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ men had to live under law, and Gentiles when they were saved had to be circumcised had to come into Israel and live under the law. So that's one of the issues before these people here in Jerusalem.

Now that the Gentiles are being saved, do they have to come under the law? We know they can be saved. We learned that in Cornelius's house, but now, the question is do they have to submit to the law? And so Peter has said no they don't. And James is now going to point out that the Old Testament has agreed with this. And in verse 16 we read,

“After this (James is saying, this is what the prophets say) After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.”

So the speech is essentially this, if we had paid attention to the Old Testament we would have understood that the Gentile salvation was a thing of the future, and furthermore he states in verse 16, “After this I will return.” Now scholars have had quite an interesting discussion over this question of the meaning of, “After this.” When one turns to the Old Testament and looks at the text there, it's an expression that really means, “in that day,” *bi yome hebue*, a Hebrew expression that in the context is referring to the day of the future. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament it reads, “In that day.”

But here in the New Testament, James has said, “After this.” Now if your reading in a Schofield Bible, it will say something like this, “After this,” that is, “After the Gentiles of the present age are saved then I will return and build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down.” In other words, after the present day of Gentile salvation, Jewish salvation will take place and ultimately worldwide salvation.

Now that’s a possible interpretation, personally I don’t think it really is as true as a slight variation. I think that what he means when he says, “After this,” is not after this salvation of the Jews, but rather after this period of rejection of the nation Israel because of their unbelief. And so this “after this” is a negative kind of statement of James, and he is simply saying we know that the nation has turned away from the Lord, and we know that the Gentiles are now being saved. Because of this, the gospel has gone out now to the Gentiles since the Jewish nation has crucified the Lord and turned away from the Lord. And now the history of salvation is moving out to the Gentiles as the Abrahamic promises comprehended. But after this period of Jewish unbelief there will be a transformation of Israel’s status. And so, he says, “After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down.”

Now some interpreters have sought to make the tabernacle of David a reference to the church. Strange interpretation if you look through the New Testament and look at the term “David.” It always means David, the historical son of Jesse. The tabernacle of David is a reference to the nation Israel, and so he says, “I will build again the tabernacle of David, it’s fallen down.” They are in unbelief. “And I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up,” but today is the day of Gentile salvation. Today is the day in which, as Paul will say in Romans he is by the salvation that is taking place seeking to bring Jewish people to jealousy over the blessings of the Lord upon the Gentiles.

Now if you’ll turn back with me to Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 21, we will read together a verse that is very important for the Apostle Paul. He cites it two times in the Epistle to the Romans. So we know that the apostle pondered this verse. This is in

the Song of Moses, one of Moses' great prophetic utterances. And in Deuteronomy 32 and verse 21 we read, “They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; (that is with Gentiles) I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.” Now what Moses has said here, and that which the apostle has thought so important, is he is prophesying that there is going to come a time when because of Israel's turning away from the Lord, he's going to provoke them to jealousy by the salvation that others are experiencing in which they are missing.

Now I'd like for you to turn with me to Romans chapter 11, Romans 11. Now in Romans 11 the apostle deals with the question of does Israel have a future, and in verse 11 he asks a question, “I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, (now notice) for to provoke them (Israel) to jealousy.” You see the reason you and I, Gentiles, are saved is ultimately to provoke Israel to jealousy. Gentile salvation is for the purpose of provoking Israel to jealousy in order that Israel may ultimately come back to the Lord and receive the ancient promises fulfilled to them. It's really a test of God's faithfulness.

So you can see how James stands up in the midst of the assembly in Jerusalem and he says look Peter is right. This is the day of Gentile salvation, and as a matter of fact, Amos has prophesied about this. Amos has said, “In that day I will return and build again the tabernacle of David.” And if one looks at the immediately preceding verse in Amos chapter 9 it's a reference to the fact of Israel's departure of the faith. Look at Amos chapter 9 verse 7 through verse 10, just before these verses, and it speaks of Israel's departure from the faith, but after this there will come again, “The rebuilding of the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down and the ruins thereof will be set up in order That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.”

So James says today is the day of Gentile salvation. There is a future day for Israel, but today is the day of Gentile salvation. Wherefore, he said, we should not require them to be circumcised. There's only a few things that we ought to be sure to ask them to observe. Now the reason we ask them to observe these things is not because they're necessary to salvation, but they will not be a stumbling block to Israelites who don't yet understand what we may understand. So he says, “They abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication,” probably a reference to marriage within the prohibited degrees. In the Old Testament there is a passage that says in marriage you cannot marry people who are certain close relatives, and it was called fornication if a person did do that. In other words, a general word for impurity in marriage. “And from things strangled, and from blood,” because the Jews in the Mosaic law were taught that they were not to eat blood. So they are to observe those things because that would upset the Jewish people.

“For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.” Unfortunately Moses still has, in many Protestant professing churches, them in every city that preach him today instead of preaching the grace of God and Jesus Christ.

“Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner. (this is the letter that they wrote after their Jerusalem Council) The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment.”

In other words, those people who went up to Antioch and said, “We come from Jerusalem, from the true disciples and we tell you, you ought to be circumcised.” James says we didn't tell them to do that. They did that of themselves.

“It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.”

That means, “Yours sincerely in grace.” Now it was a nice letter that they wrote, and it settled the issue, and Paul and his company went back to Antioch. And we read in the 30th verse,

“So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.”

And so, they had a nice time together. And some went back to Jerusalem, but Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch with Silas. “Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. So Paul and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.” That’s an interest statement, isn't it? In other words,

the apostle and Barnabas, and Silas was with them, they stayed there, and they began the ministry which they had been carrying on in Antioch.

And notice that there were many who were doing the preaching. There was no pastor of the church in Antioch. The church of Antioch had teachers and prophets. It had a gifted ministry. It did not have one man, one pastor ministry. This is the way the early church was organized. It was organized very similar in this respect to the synagogue in that there was freedom for the ministry of the word by those who had gifts of ministry. So, “Many others also,” and in that “many others,” no doubt, are many people whose names never appear in the New Testament. When we get to heaven, we’ll shake hands with some and you’ll say, “Well what’s your name?” And he will say, “Well my name is Gideon,” I started to say Barabbas, but I don't think it would be Barabbas, “Gideon something or other, and I lived in Antioch, and I preached the word in Antioch.” And we will say, “Well I thought Paul and Barnabas preached there?” “Well, yes they also preached there, but I preached too. I shared the platform with them.” So it’s going to be interesting to see some of the things that we will come to understand when we get to heaven.

Now the apostle and Barnabas with Silas stayed in Antioch for some time teaching the word, but now in verse 36 we read of the things that lead up to Paul’s second missionary journey. “And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the LORD, and see how they do.” That was a natural thing. He had been on his first missionary journey to Antioch and Iconium and Lystra and Derbe. It was natural for him now to wonder how they were getting along. “And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.”

Now, this is the Mark who wrote the second gospel, Matthew, Mark. He was related to Mark. Barnabas was his uncle. So Barnabas and Mark had a natural family relationship, as well as a Christian relationship. And so, “Barnabas determined to take

with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.”

So turn back to chapter 13. Now this is the text to which incident Paul refers, or the text on the incident which Paul refers. This is Acts 13:13, “Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.”

Now, we don't know, of course, what it was that caused John to go back. There have been many questions over this. Some have thought that maybe he was homesick. Others have said he thought about the perils of the way because they were going to go up into central Asia Minor, and it was a place in which your life might be in danger if you had anything worthwhile. It was known as a place of bandits and gangsters and rustlers and things like this. So John Mark may have been upset by that.

Still others have even suggested that he wasn't too happy with this theology that Paul was talking about all the time because after all he had grown up in a Jewish home, and this idea of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles and saying to them they were not under law, but under grace, when he had grown up being taught that he was under law. He still had not managed to extricate himself completely from that kind of background. Some have suggested that. Of course, there's nothing in the text about why. That's why the scholars and students are engaging in speculation. Homesick, perils, theology, maybe he was at the crossroads of his own experience. At any rate, he decided that he would go home and Paul did not want any quitter with them on this second missionary journey.

So it's clear that Barnabas has a much kinder attitude towards John Mark than Paul does. Barnabas determined to take him; Paul thought it not good to take him. And yes the 39th verse is really in the New Testament. “And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.”

Well, that’s an interesting verse, isn’t it? In the first place, it indicates that in the early church, they didn’t always have quiet discussion. They didn’t all gather together and say now look we’ve got to love each other. We’ve got to pat each other on the back. And we’ve got to say nice things to one another even though we disagree fundamentally. No, no. They weren’t like that. They were honest. They laid their cards on the tables, and they said look. And Paul said, “He was a quitter. He left, and it was his fault.” And Barnabas said, “Oh but he’s such a young fellow.” He was a son of consolation, Barnabas was, a noble man. And I can just imagine them going back and forth over this question, and neither one of them could prove their case evidently. Although the early church thought, it seems, that Paul had the best of the discussion because we read that he was, “Recommended of the brethren unto the grace of God.” So evidently in the argument the early church was convinced that more truth lay on Paul’s side than on Barnabas’s. But we don’t know. All we know is that Paul contended that Mark had in the words of one commentator, “Flinched, flickered, and quit.”

G.K. Chesterton once said, “The worst thing about a quarrel is that it stops an argument.” [Laughter] There are times when it’s good to have an argument. It’s good to have an argument. It’s not good to lose an argument, but it’s good to have an argument. [Laughter] I told you I just bought a book on how to win arguments, and when I rived it has subtitled “Most of the Time.” I was looking for a fool proof way to win arguments, and I wasn’t going to show it to Martha at all. [Laughter] But when it said, “Most of the Time,” I had to show it to her.

But let me suggest something to you here of more solemn significance. This illustrates the fact that even about the good men in the Bible there is an imperfection. In other words, great though Barnabas was he was a noble figure, one of the noblest figures of the New Testament, but nevertheless he didn’t always see things clearly. Remember when Peter stopped eating with the Gentiles and started eating only with the Jews, we read that it fooled everybody so much that even Barnabas was carried away by his

dissimulation. So Barnabas was a noble figure, a son of consolation, and the man who really went out and got Paul and brought him from Tarsus back to Antioch so he could begin his great ministry there from which, of course, his great ministry to the west developed. Barnabas was the one that had been more influential in his Christian life than perhaps anyone else. But the imperfect goodness of good men certainly appears here. And by the way, this is the last glimpse in Luke of Barnabas. You never hear of him anymore in Luke's writings.

I think also there's another thing that appears here, and that is that, the grave issues of small faults. Some think that this wrecked the life of Barnabas. In fact, some think it wrecked the life of John Mark. Sometimes the little things really have tragic consequences. But in the case of John Mark we know it didn't wreck his life because later on Paul, when he's in his last days, said, "Send Mark. He's "meet for the master's use." So, evidently he had either made confession of his sin, or the apostle had come to a deepened appreciation of him. But for Barnabas, well we have no absolute assurance of what happened in his later life. Perhaps it was just a disagreement that he had with Paul, and that's all it really amounted to. When we get to heaven we shall find out. But as I say it does seem that the apostle was perhaps right in the light of the fact that the church and Luke specifically records this, recommended him and Silas to the grace of God as they began their second missionary journey. So the one to whom Paul owed more than anything else, humanly speaking in his Christian life, is the one with whom he differed.

Now, turning to chapter 16 as we continue the story of the second missionary journey. We read,

“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named (Timothy) Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.”

So, Timothy is a young Christian man who has a Christian home. He had a grandmother who was a Christian, Paul says in 2 Timothy 1, and his mother was a Christian. His father was a Greek. So he is the product of a mixed marriage of Gentile and Jew. In 1 Timothy chapter 1, Paul claims him as his convert. And evidently, he was the reason why his grandmother and his mother were converted as well, perhaps in the ministry at Lystra. And so in that ministry there where he had been stoned and thought to be dead, through the ministry that he carried on in that area, this family was touched, Eunice, Lois and now Timothy. And Timothy has grown to be a young man, Paul's convert.

Now we don't read anything about his talents. We don't read that he was particularly skilled in mathematics or in languages or in philosophy. He could well have been because they studied those things in Timothy's day. We read nothing about his education. We don't read he was a graduate of the University of Tarsus, or of the University of Athens, or whatever. We only read that he had been approved by the saints. We read, “He was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.”

There's a great lesson in this. And the lesson, of course, for a person who's thinking about engaging in the Lord's work is that he must be faithful in the work at home before he can be effective in the work away from home. When you attend missionary meetings, one of the points the missionaries always make is if you're not a missionary at home the chances are you will not be a missionary when you get out on the mission field. And so he was a person who had demonstrated that he was a faithful and fruitful worker.

“He was well reported of by the brethren.” That's extremely important, and because, “He was well reported of by the brethren,” the apostle knew that he would be a helpful man to have along. “Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and

circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.” Now, that’s an interesting thing too. “He took and circumcised him.”

Now, I’d like for you to turn over to Galatians chapter 2 because there is an interesting account here of what the apostle demanded with reference to Titus when the question of his circumcision came up. Let’s read beginning at verse 1. This is the visit that took place some years before the incident of Timothy. “Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.” This is the famine visit when he went up to help them before the Jerusalem Council.

“And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus that they might bring us into bondage. (they wanted to bring them to the place where they would be circumcised in order to be saved) To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”

Now this has been a problem too many because in one place we read that Paul circumcised Timothy, and then in the other place he refused to have Titus circumcised. So does not this indicate that the apostle is inconsistent? Well, no not necessarily, if the issues are different. And in Galatians he tells us that the issue is the gospel. Those false brethren had come in, and they were very anxious to see what Paul would do about the question of the circumcision of Titus. And if Paul had said Titus ought to be circumcised, he would have fallen right into the trap of agreement that a person, in order to be saved, needed to believe in Christ and also be circumcised. So he

said, “We didn't yield in subjection, No not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might remain.”

But in Timothy's case there was no question about that. The question was simply here is a young man who has a Jewish mother and a Greek father, and he's not been circumcised, and he's going to be the helper of the Apostle Paul who's going to go into many synagogues. And there he's going to preach the gospel, and yet he hasn't been circumcised. He hasn't identified himself with the nation Israel. And so Paul had him circumcised because of the Jews which were in those quarters for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Now remember the son of a Jewish mother was reckoned to be a Jew. So in order for him to have access to the fellowship of the synagogue, it was necessary, Paul thought, to have him circumcised. It's perfectly alright to be circumcised. It's perfectly alright not to be circumcised in this age. And so a Christian has freedom to have his children circumcised or not to be circumcised. But if the issue is this, if for the sake of the gospel that is, this is necessary to be saved, then the Christian would have to say, “No, we cannot.”

So Timothy was circumcised in order that there would be no questions as they went into the synagogue. In other words, it illustrates a very important point that the same act is not always the same act. One must understand the background of the act. So in this case Timothy was circumcised in order that he might be adaptable to work among the Jewish people, adaptability on account of the opportunity. Titus's, of course, was a hindrance to the gospel.

By the way there's an interesting little question here. Why didn't his mother, Eunice have him circumcised? After all, that was the law. She was Jewish. She has a male child. Why didn't she have him circumcised? Raises some interesting questions doesn't it? One thing maybe you could say was she wasn't a feminist. She didn't go to Timothy's father and say, “Look I don't care what you say. I'm going to have him

circumcised.” But evidently she didn't have him circumcised, but she trained him up in the faith because Paul says the faith that he had was first in his grandmother and then in his mother. That's an interesting question isn't it? Well, of course, we don't know what Timothy's father really said about this. Maybe it was just purely neglect. We don't really know. But she did train him up in the faith because Paul specifically says in the 2nd epistle to Timothy that the faith that he has, which came from Paul, came through his grandmother and through his mother. So Paul's claiming the whole family. They're his converts.

Now they begin their evangelization and verse 6 through verse 10 we have the account of it. And when we finish this I will stop for tonight, but look at these verses. They're very interesting. “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.”

One wonders how they were forbidden, Luke doesn't tell us. Was it that a bridge was out? Was it that it was impassable and consequently they couldn't get through? Was it because they had some visible occurrence that was from the Lord that gave them indication that they should not go there? When they got to the border of Asia, that was a part of Asia Minor, when they got to the section of the country that was called Asia and they sought to cross the border, did they discover that those who had the authority to admit them refused to admit them? Did he say to them, “Why are you here?” And did Paul say, “We're here to preach the gospel.” And he said, “We don't want anybody here preaching the gospel.” We're not told. We're simply told that they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.

And so they turn north. “After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia.” Now that was to the north and to the east. And so when they got up in the northern part of Asia Minor, this is all present day Turkey, they were up there and, “They assayed to go into Bithynia: and the Spirit suffered them not.” So they tried to go into Bithynia. They couldn't go there. The circumstances were contrary whether it was a

person word from the spirit or not we don't know. But we know that trying to go west, they were prohibited, turning north and trying to go north and to the east, they were prohibited, so they were forced down to the west and north.

And finally we read, “And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas,” ancient Troy, history Troy, near Homer’s Troy, the battle ground between Europe and Asia. Before I was a Christian I read about Troy. I studied Virgil, Homer and consequently read about Troy, read about the Trojan horse and Hector and Achilles and all of the rest of the ancient heroes, and a couple of years ago we were on a boat, and we sailed down the side of Asia Minor. And we looked off, and there was Troy over on the side. We could see where it was, but they wouldn't turn that boat in for me, so I got a look at Troy and that was all.

Here they are. Now, they’re in Troas, and we read, “And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we.” Did you notice that? Now the author of this book has not been using the first personal pronoun. Luke evidently joined them here. “We endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.” So, forbidden to preach in Asia. Not allowed to preach in Bithynia. They come down to Troas, and there they receive a vision of a man of Macedonia, and now they’re going to go across to Europe.

One might say, “Why were they forbidden to preach in Asia? Why forbidden to preach in Bithynia?” Why the answer to that is very simply Dr. Johnson. The Macedonian’s in Greece were more worthy than those in Asia and more worthy than those in Bithynia. Well no, of course not, “For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of your selves. It’s the gift of God not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Nobody is worthier than another person to be saved. Well it must be because God had foreseen their faith in Macedonia. And he foresaw that there were not any in Asia and

not any in Bithynia at the present time who were going to believe, and so he sought out those that he saw would believe.

Now if you turn over to Romans chapter 10 and verse 20, the apostle really doesn't follow that kind of theology. He follows the theology of the Old Testament prophets, for he cites Isaiah. And he says, “But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.” So speaking for God the prophet says those people who weren't seeking me found me, and those people who had not asked after me, they are the ones to whom I was made manifest.

You see the prophets and the apostles, all of them together, unite in teaching. It is the sovereign grace of God that works in the salvation of individuals. Do you know why God foresaw their faith? He did foresee their faith because he had foreordained their faith. That's why. We've already read that in the Book of Acts. Haven't we? You see not only Isaiah, not only Paul, but Luke who wrote this history believed the same thing. Remember when they were in Antioch what Luke said? We read, “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”

That's why they went to Macedonia. There were individuals who were ordained to eternal life sitting over there, and one of them, together with some others, one of them was a rather well to do woman. She was in business. She was a modern business woman. She would have been in the section of the news paper, *The Dallas Morning News* on Sunday that has “Profile,” Lydia, purple merchant. She was in the purple business, purple dye. And isn't it interesting to read that she was from where? From Asia, she was from Asia, the very place that Paul was prevented from entering. So I guess in heaven when Paul tried to get into Asia, all the saints gathered around and said, “Look he's trying to go into Asia, but she's over in Philippi. It's going to be interesting to see how he gets there.”

You know God's ways are impossible for us to fathom. The Asian woman is over there by the riverside on the Sabbath day, praying. Evidently very concerned about her own spiritual relationship to the Lord and the man who is going to be the instrumentality to bring her to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is on his way. And as Paul looks back over things, he said to that little company that he was traveling with, he said, “Look I've been thinking we tried to go into Asia, and we couldn't get in. And we tried to go into Bithynia, and we couldn't get in. We've been forced down here. And now we've had this vision of this man who evidently is a Greek fellow from Macedonia, and in this vision he is saying, ‘Come over and help us.’ So he said, I think we ought to go.” That verb that is used here “assuredly gathering” means “to put two and two together.” In fact it's a word that means to unite and was frequently used of animals in a sexual kind of way. So he put all of these things together and he said, “Look we've got to go to the west.” And of course, that's what happens.

“And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.” Evangelism by the spirit of God is evangelism by one who guides us amid contentions, amid the stresses of life, amid visions by the common place, by the miraculous. We have to remember that we are human beings, and therefore we do not fully understand everything that is happening to us. Bismarck once said something that I think is something worth remembering. He was a great man himself, in his own way. He was a man who had the ability to put together spiritual things with political things. And I really have never studied his faith to know whether he was a genuine Christian or not. There are many things that he did that were rather strange, but he is the father of modern Germany, the one through whom Germany was united. He once said this, “The statesman cannot create the stream of time, he can only navigate it. The statesman must try and reach for the hem when he hears the garment of God rustling through events.” Wouldn't it be nice if our politicians all had that philosophy? He cannot “create the

stream of time, but when he hears the garment of God rustling through events,” then he needs to grab hold of the garment of God.

Well it was something like that for Paul as he was guided and directed in his ministry, and he was hindered from this, and he was moved to this, and finally as he put things together made his way across the Aegean Sea, and preached the gospel there. And Paul was called to Europe not to spread religion but to preach the gospel and that of course is what he will do. And in our next study, the Lord willing, we will take a look at what happened when he got over into Europe and brought the gospel there for the first time. Let's bow in a closing word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the things that we learn from the life of the Apostle Paul. What a magnificent servant of Thine. Oh God, lay upon us the same kind of sense of divine call and mission that the apostle had. We know we're not apostles, but we are servants. And oh God, help us to serve Thee...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]