

THE GOSPEL IN MOTION

Acts 16

Notes

Often in our lives we might find ourselves living out the gospel, reading the Bible, spending time in prayer, serving in the church, demonstrating Christlikeness to those around us and then the proverbial stick gets stuck in the tire of life, and we are thrown for a loop.

We end up hurt, crying, and stunned. Sometimes this happens by the hands of others and sometimes it happens by our own hands.

For whatever reason the gospel ceases to be in motion in our lives.

What once was a vibrant gospel-centered life is now a shell of its former self.

You may find yourself there today. You know what you should be doing, you know the blessings of allowing the gospel to flow through your life, but for one reason or another you have ceased allowing the gospel to move in and through you.

Today, as we look at Acts 16, we will see 4 individual responses to the gospel—three of the responses allowed the gospel to move through them for God's glory and one of the responses focused on self and tried to shut down the gospel.

What is your response to the gospel? Will you be a person who shuts down the gospel in your life or will you allow the gospel to flow through you, effecting your life for the glory of God?

Will you allow the trials of life to stop your growth as a disciple and cause you to forfeit the blessings of growing closer to Jesus?

As the gospel is continually in motion in our hearts, our lives will continually move both ourselves and others to Jesus.

As we enter Acts 16 Paul and Barnabas have had a fight over the missionary team and have decided to do two mission trips instead of one.

Barnabas wanted to bring John Mark along on the trip, but Paul was still upset about John Mark abandoning them in Perga, heading back to Jerusalem in Acts 13:13.

They could not agree on the issue and so they went their separate ways doing two mission trips instead of one.

I find it interesting that Paul and Barnabas just had a huge theological debate that could have ruined the church in Acts 15 and instead of that they helped the church unify, but then personally they could not resolve their own conflict.

This little episode in Acts 15:36-41 shows us that no one is perfect.

We now join Paul on his second missionary journey where he has Silas as his partner in Acts 16.

As the Gospel is in Motion in Our Lives, We Will Be Disciples Who Makes Disciples

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, ² and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. ³ Paul wanted this man to go with him; and

he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴ Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. ⁵ So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

Paul is commissioned to go on a second mission trip by the Antioch church and he revisited the churches he planted on his first missionary journey.

But notice what is so crazy about the first leg of this journey. He goes back to Derbe and Lystra where he was whipped, stoned, and left for dead.

While in Lystra he meets a young man who obviously had been converted through his ministry the first time around.

Timothy had a good reputation and after talking with Paul, Timothy decided to devote his life to the gospel witness.

Timothy had a Jewish mom and a pagan dad. He would be around both strict Jews and pagans. Timothy was considered Jewish because of his mom, but his Greek dad would not have had him circumcised so Paul did this to help Timothy be able to fellowship with other Jews.

Paul never asked Jews to abandon circumcision as their mark, just as he did not ask Gentiles to undergo the procedure.

Two things here:

- Timothy underwent an extremely painful procedure for the sake of sharing the gospel

We often give reasons of complaint as to why we do not wish to do something.

We like things the way we like them, and we do not tolerate any other way.

Think about this. Timothy underwent an extremely painful procedure so others could hear the gospel message.

Consider all the reasons we give to not engage others with the gospel; to be a disciple who makes disciples.

- Busy; not skilled; too much on my plate; not called; lazy?

Why are we so quick to come up with reasons to not share the gospel or participate in the gospel ministry?

What reasons do you give?

Jesus plainly told us that in order to live we must deny self and take up our cross, yet we still think and try to live the Christian life, this gospel life w/o actually giving up anything.

We cannot allow life to go unchanged if we are to change the world with the gospel.

We must be willing to let go and give up things we hold dear so that we are free to be used as Christ sees fit to use us.

Timothy followed the gospel in obedience and lived his life on mission.

Timothy left family and familiarity to be obedient to the gospel ministry.

Verse 4 says they went town to town instructing others about the gospel and the letter from the Jerusalem Council.

Notice the result of their efforts- the church was strengthened in their faith and grew larger.

The word strengthened here gives the idea of a young boy in puberty filling out with muscle and losing baby fat.

Notice this and this is important. As the churches grew in strength they also grew in size.

As more of us respond to the gospel message; as more of us draw closer to Jesus through spending time in the word; as more of us seek him in prayer; as more of us mature in Christ; the more we will serve Christ, his church, and others; the more we will be disciple makers and guess what happens when that happens?

As the gospel is in motion in our lives, we will grow in sharing Christ and having gospel interactions and the church will automatically grow.

A healthy growing church is produced by members who are growing in Christ and living out the Bible in their lives.

Are we responding to the gospel in obedience?

Are we living on mission?

Think about your life right now. Is the gospel in motion in your life? Are you personally growing as a disciple of Jesus? Are you growing as a disciple maker of Jesus?

Beloved, your life can have an impact that can be reflected throughout eternity. This impact comes as we devote ourselves to Jesus and allow the gospel to move through us and move us.

So Paul, Silas, and Timothy set off on their journey and they travel many places, but the Lord would not allow them to go where they wanted to go.

Paul wanted to go to Asia, but we see in verses 6-10 that the door to Asia would not open.

The Lord spoke to Paul in a dream and told him to go to Macedonia.

They loaded up and headed to the big city of Philippi.

As the Gospel is in Motion in Our Lives, We Will Notice Doors Open and Doors Closed for Ministry

⁶ They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; ⁷ and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; ⁸ and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. ⁹ A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Paul desperately wanted to go to Asia, but God would not allow him to go.

He wanted an open door and tried several times to make one open, but God would not open the door.

But in not opening the door to Asia, God opened the door to Europe, and Paul and team went to the city of Philippi and planted a church.

Watch this. When God closes a door in your life there is another door, he already has open for you to walk through.

Think about Paul. He desperately wanted to go and share the gospel to the people in Asia, but God said no. Why would God say no? Wasn't Paul trying to make disciples? Wasn't he trying to do God's will?

As Paul is wrestling with the "no" answer from God, Paul is told in a dream to go to Macedonia and help the people.

They recognized this vision as being from God and went to preach the gospel to the people in Europe.

Chuck Swindoll comments on this passage and says, "When you're following the plan of God, dead ends are never mistakes" (ACTS, 319).

You may be wondering what God wants you to do with your life right now.

You may be done with one thing; you may be wanting to start a new thing; we may be in a period of transition right now. Let me give you a few words of wisdom:

Pray between doors

Trust God

God often must stop us to slow us down enough to turn us in the direction he wants

Know God knows your situation and he has a door for you

God's timing is perfect even when it does not seem like it.

So, Paul and company board a boat and head to Philippi.

Philippi used to be a small village, but in 357 BC Philip II of Macedonia made it a military stronghold. The city became a chief city due to its location, economy, influence, gold, and its medical school.

But Philippi did not have a Jewish synagogue, so the Jews met outside of town by the river at a "place of prayer".

This is where we pick up our story.

¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. ¹⁴ A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. ¹⁵ And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

When the gospel is in motion in our lives, we will use our resources to advance the gospel in the lives of others.

While at the river Paul spoke to a God-fearing woman name Lydia who was a dealer in purple fabric.

Lydia believed in the OT God and when Paul explained the rest of the gospel to her, she opened her heart to Christ.

Lydia was quite wealthy, as a dealer in purple fabric, as purple was used to make clothes for royalty.

Watch this; this is so cool. Lydia was from Thyatira, a city founded by the Lydian kingdom in the region known as Lydia. Lydia was more than likely her nickname so she could enhance her business as being known from coming from this place.

Thyatira is a center city of the Roman province of Asia. The Lydian kingdom covered the very territory Paul could not enter.

So, while Paul could not enter Asia, he was able to share the gospel with a prominent businesswoman who travelled to Asia regularly.

You never know the impact you can have in one life if you are faithful to pour into that life.

The impact of our lives is not static, but dynamic like a rock in a pond. As we pour into one life that life can touch people we could never touch.

Let's get back to Lydia. Lydia heard the gospel, believed, and was baptized.

Lydia invited Paul and his troupe back to her house and it is in her house that the first church in Philippi began.

Of all of Paul's churches, the Philippians' generosity stood out most.

Lydia took an active role in the ministry of her church and other churches.

Lydia heard the gospel, accepted the gospel, and then shared in the ministry as she was able.

Lydia opened her home and used her financial resources to fund the ministry of the church.

She was both hospitable with her home and generous with her money.

How are we assisting in the ministry of the gospel?

Often, we stay on the sidelines of the ministry only getting in for special team plays (events) and not involved in the normal ministry of the local church.

While we surely need assistance when we have large events, we also need you to invest in the daily and weekly ministries of the church.

We need people to serve and mentor with the youth and children on Sunday nights. We need Sunday School teachers. We need people to work with us in our various school ministries.

We need people to be faithful with their finances and tithe and give.

Can I ask, how are you being faithful in the stewardship of your resources?

Maybe you have been here for a while and have not thought about giving to the work of the ministry. Today is a day to make a commitment to get involved both physically and financially.

When you serve and when you give you help us make a difference for the kingdom of God.

As we are faithful to give and use our resources the gospel can continually be in motion in our community.

As we move to verses 16-18 Paul and the team were ministering and a demon possessed girl who was a fortune teller kept following them and the demon even recognized the men as servants of God and evangelists of the gospel message.

This went on day after day and Paul got tired of it and he commanded the demon to come out of the girl and the demon left her, making her whole again.

But, the demon was empowering the girl to tell fortunes, and fortune telling in Rome was big business so her masters got upset.

19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, 20 and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, 21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." 22 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. 23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; 24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

The Profiteer heard the gospel, rejected it and tried to shut down the ministry.

Realizing their money stream had dried up, her masters got upset and rallied the entire town against Paul and Silas.

They brought them to the town magistrates, had them beaten with rods, and thrown in prison.

The masters undoubtedly heard the true gospel, but they were more interested in making money; they were more interested in profit than they were the gospel or the life of the girl.

As the gospel is in motion in our lives, there will be people who will try to stop the gospel from impacting the world.

The girl's masters were partners with evil, they would not recognize the gospel, they were more concerned with profits than people, and they were willing to lie to protect themselves.

The gospel did not save them because they were more concerned with status than the condition of their souls.

They rejected and tried to shut down the gospel ministry.

There are people in this world, in our jobs, at our schools, even in our families that are more concerned with this world than eternity.

These individuals do not like being challenged, corrected, or encouraged in the gospel.

When the gospel moves into their lives, they do all they can to either get out of the way of the gospel or stop others from sharing and living the gospel.

I want to encourage you in this.

People will try to shut down the gospel in your life. Don't stop living, don't stop sharing the gospel, don't stop being a disciple maker.

The kingdom of God is not stopped by the power of the world but has the power to overcome the world.

And many times, in this life, it is not the world that will try to shut the gospel down in our lives, but it is our own self who tries to stop the gospel from changing us.

What about you, is there something in your life that you are keeping, that is keeping the gospel from flourishing in your life?

Is there something in your life that is keeping the gospel from flourishing?

Let's jump down to verse 25 and we find Paul and Silas in prison.

²⁵ But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; ²⁶ and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" ²⁹ And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰ and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² And they spoke the word of [n]the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. ³⁴ And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

This is probably my favorite part of chapter 16.

Paul and Silas are thrown in jail and instead of complaining what do we find them doing?

How is it that they can sing praises to God while wrongfully imprisoned, yet, we complain when someone gives us a dirty look, says something mean to us, or when someone unfriends us on social media?

We do everything we can do to avoid pain and suffering, yet throughout the Bible it is often during pain and suffering that a person grows closer to Christ and is most effective for the gospel.

While singing, the prison was shaken to its core and all the doors open.

Check this out. Paul and company convinced all the other prisoners to not escape.

The jailer was so happy they did not escape; he was amazed by the miracle so he asks the most obvious question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Paul tells him the same answer we would tell anyone. "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved."

"You will." It's a guarantee.

The jailer brings them to his house. They share the gospel with his family and they believe and are saved.

If it were not for Paul and Silas being in prisoner, the jailer and his family would not have heard the gospel.

Your difficult circumstance provides you an opportunity to share the gospel in a way others may not see or hear otherwise.

Then the most amazing thing happens.

Where he once beat them and imprisoned them, we now see this jailer who was their enemy, now their brother in Christ, showing compassion and kindness to them as he mends their wounds.

The gospel truly changed his life.

The gospel has the power to change the most far from God person you know.

That is why we push being disciple makers so hard here. That is why we encourage and celebrate gospel interactions.

The gospel has the power to change lives.

More importantly, the gospel has the power to change your life!

How has the gospel changed you?

There should be a marked change in your life in regard to your attitude, motivations, purpose, goals, language, and actions as a result of your relationship with Jesus.

Those who allow the Gospel to be in motion in their lives:

Respond in obedience

Live on mission

Share in ministry

Remove obstacles

Demonstrate a changed life

How will you allow the Gospel to move through you, your family, friends, and the world?