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Paul's Ministry in Establishing a Church at Ephesus **Paul's Second Missionary Journey**

The events described in the first and second missionary journey took place between AD 60-63. It was written along with the Book of Ephesians which is from this same time period.

Journey Begins with Disagreement

Acts 15:30-41 - Paul's second missionary journey began when he and Barnabus went to Antioch of Syria. While there they were joined by John Mark disagreed over having John Mark with them. Barnabus was determined that John Mark should go with them and Paul was adamantly against it. John Mark had earlier deserted them in Pamphylia, vv. 36-38. The contention became so pronounced that Barnabus departed with John Mark and went to Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas to continue with him through Syria strengthening the churches there, vv. 39-40. Paul was concerned for the new churches and so he return to many and wrote letters to some in order to strengthen them, v. 41.

Lessons: (1) Disagreement among believers does not have to damage the work, and may even become a catalyst for a greater work. The result here was two strong dynamic duos instead of one. (2) It is important in doing God's work to have the right people assigned to the right task.

Paul and Silas Minister in south Galatia and Cilicia, Meet Timothy

16:1-5 - Paul and Silas ministered in Derbe and Lystra and found a young Jewish convert named Timothy. His mother was Jewish but his father was Greek. He was commended by the believers in Lystra and Iconium. Timothy was the son of Eunice and his grandmother Lois, 2 Tim 1:5. Silas replaced Barnabus and Timothy replaced John Mark. So they took Timothy with them to help strengthen the churches in the region. Timothy was circumcised in order that they might share the gospel with the Jews and because he was known as the son of a Greek man, v. 3. Barnabus is heard from no more in Acts but later Paul gave him a commendation in his letter to the church at Corinth, 1 Cor 9:6. The goal of this new missionary team had been to move north into Asia but they were forbidden to do so. As they traveled through the cities of this region they shared the decrees and instructions that had been given by the apostles in Jerusalem, thus strengthening the churches with the truth of God that both strengthened believers and won new converts, vv. 4-5.

Lesson: The steps of a righteous man or woman are ordered by the Lord. Here we see those called out leaders sharing the truth of the Gospel. They did so with passion and with persistence. This plan of evangelization is a valid biblical method that should be emulated today.

Paul and Silas, the Macedonian Call

16:6-10 - Paul and Silas were redirected by the Holy Spirit. They were forbidden to go to Asia and instead went to Macedonia. It is easy to see why they were instructed to head for Macedonia when you look at the immediate results.

16:11-34 - First, Paul and Silas were instrumental in leading Lydia the merchant of purple dye, a most prominent businesswoman of Philippi, to become a believer, vv. 11-15. Second, they led a well-known slave girl who had a "spirit of divination," to become a believer, vv. 16-18. She gave up her divination and her owners had Paul and Silas thrown into prison, vv. 19-24. Third, Paul and Silas found themselves at odds with the owners of the young lady who practiced divination. They were arrested and thrown into prison. At midnight they sang hymns and praised God. So from prison they witnessed to all in the jail, including the jailor and his family, and all were saved, vv. 25-34.

16:35-40 - When they were released by the magistrate they did not leave town quietly. They revealed that they had been beaten and that they were Romans the leaders were afraid. So Paul and Silas left Philippi.

Lesson: Every person is either set free by the power of the Gospel, or they are enslaved by Satan and sin. Freedom can only come by hearing the Gospel and responding to it, Rom 10:16-17. When we suffer for doing the work of God, if we maintain the right attitude, He can use us in such times to be a great witness for Him. It is a reminder that the Gospel in the early church was spread by the fires of persecution. In each case the apostles turned liabilities into an asset. We see here the providential protection given to the disciples and apostles.

Paul and Silas Minister In Prominent Cities in Macedonia & Greece to Asia

17:1-9 - In Thessalonica Paul preached the Gospel in the synagogue as was his custom, vv. 1-4. The Jews who refused to believe gathered a mob and attacked the home of Jason, a believer yelling, "these who have turned the world upside down have come here also," v. 6. When Jason had subdued the crowd he immediately sent Paul away to Berea, v. 9-10.

17:10-15 - In Berea the people were very responsive. Paul left Silas and Timothy there and headed for Athens.

17:16-34 - Paul used the climate of Athens to his advantage. He began to dialogue with the Epicureans and philosophers who listened intently as he told them about the "Unknown God" who created all things. The Greeks listened intently until he began teaching them about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Some accepted others rejected and some said they would speak to him again, vv. 24-33.

Lesson: Paul and Silas had mixed response in Greece and Macedonia. Even though there was no immediate groundswell of beginning, the foundations were laid that did later bear fruit. We cannot always see the immediate results of the work that God leads us to do. These men were following the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We must always remember that some are called to plant, some to water, others to reap the harvest, see 1 Cor 3:1-17.

Paul Teaches Aquila and Priscilla, Takes Them to Ephesus

18:1-17 - After leaving Athens Paul went to Corinth and met Aquila and Priscilla, believers, who also were tentmakers as he was, v. 3. Paul preached in the synagogue but was not well received. So, he declared his intention to "go to the Gentiles," v. 6. He preached in the home of Justus, who lived next door to the synagogue and finally Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue was saved, v. 8. Paul continued in Corinth for a year and six months, v. 11.

18:18-21 - When he departed Corinth for Antioch he took Aquila and Priscilla with him and went to Ephesus. He left them there and returned to Caesarea and Jerusalem. Aquila and Priscilla evidently laid the foundation for the church at Ephesus.

18:22-28 - Apollos came to Ephesus and met Aquila and Priscilla who taught him all the things that they had learned from Paul. He then became an ardent defender of the faith and openly engaged the Jews, v. 28.

Lesson: God often provides not only what we need, but who we need. Paul found two people who not only shared his skills as a tentmaker, but also shared his love for Jesus and the sharing of the Gospel. Like Paul we need pour our lives into those who can learn from us and undergird God's work. Aquila and Priscilla laid the foundation for the beginning of the church at Ephesus.

Paul Ministers in Asia: Returns to Ephesus & Greece

19:1-10 Leaving Antioch in Syria, Paul made his way to Ephesus. There he encountered disciples of John the Baptist who had not heard about Jesus. He shared the Gospel and baptized them. Then he entered the synagogue but some did not receive the message of "the Way," even though he continued this dialogue for two years.

19:11-20 - Even though Paul confirmed his message with signs and wonders he still not only had skeptics, but satanic adversaries in the seven sons of Sceva who were performing exorcisms in Ephesus by the power of evil spirits. This sort of thing did not stop in Paul's day. Nevertheless, another man with an evil spirit came against the seven sons, attacked them, and chased them away. As a result fear fell on all of Ephesus, and Jesus was glorified and many became believers, vv. 15-18. Finally, all those who had books on magic and the curious arts brought them out and burned them. The value of these books was 50,000 pieces of silver. And the Word of God grew and mightily prevailed, vv. 19-20.

19:21-41 - Paul was committed to go to Jerusalem and finally to Rome. He left the city in riots because of the loss of the revenue of those places that sold small silver statues of the goddess Diana. Ephesus was the location of one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the temple to the goddess Diana. Sale of these small souvenir statues of Diana had been ruined by the conversion of many of the citizens of Ephesus to Christianity. Paul denounced the false gods saying gods were not made by human hands, v. 26. Paul and his travel companions were seized and their safety in jeopardy. The city clerk came to their defense and warned the people that Paul was a Roman citizen and their actions could bring repercussions, vv. 35-41.

Lesson: Believers should be careful not to condone or get involved in any way with magic, witchcraft, séances, fortune telling, horoscopes, black magic, mediums, etc. all of which have the potential of opening up a person to satanic oppression, opposition, and control. A true believer cannot be demon possessed, but most certainly can be demon oppressed and attacked.

Paul's Final Advice to the Ephesian Elders

20:1-6 - After the riots ceased, Paul returned to Macedonia with a number of church leaders including Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus some who went ahead and some point but all gathered at Troas, Paul's home town.

20:7-16 - Paul ministered briefly at Troas even raising and healing Eutychus who fell from the third story of the place where Paul was preaching, vv. 7-12. Next he sailed to Miletus, and there called for the elders of the church of Ephesus to come and meet with him there.

20:17-38 - Paul calls for the elders of the church from Ephesus to meet with him. It is a pastoral meeting in which the great apostle sets forth the principles of ministry for the Ephesian church and for any other church committed to serving the Lord. Here is what he told them in word and deed. (1) live among the people, v. 18; (2) serve with humility, v. 19; (3) teach ubiquitously, v. 20; (4) testifying of repentance and faith to all, v. 21; (5) follow the lead of the Holy Spirit, even to dangerous places, v. 22-23; (6) finish the race as a good and godly example, v. 24; (7) preach the Kingdom of God, v. 25; (8) share the whole counsel of God, v. 26-27; (9) care for your flock, v. 28; (10) protect your flock, v. 29-31; (11) rely totally on God, v. 32; (12) avoid wealth as a downfall, v. 33-34; (13) be an example to the flock in word, deed, and generosity, v. 35; (14) pray both for and with the flock, v. 36; (15) embrace the flock, v. 38.

Lesson: This is the finest description of what we are to do and to be in our commitment to the church. Remember that every believer is a priest and a minister of the Gospel. Lay people reach more people for the Kingdom than all the preachers put together. These principles shared by Paul with the leaders of the church at Ephesus are the supreme principles of servant leadership.