

Paul's Kingdom Strategies

Acts 15:36-16:40

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In our section today we will see a few of Paul's strategies for his missionary journey and their varied results. Some strategies brought heartbreaking conflict, some seem confusing, some needed divine correction, some resulted in incarceration and some in conversions. Regardless of the outcome, through them all, you can see Paul's commitment to the work God had called him to, and the power of God at work through Paul to achieve His purposes.

Strategy Regarding Mark (15:36-41)

This passage gives us a front row seat to one of the saddest moments in the early church so far. Paul's mission strategy was to head back out from Antioch and encourage the believers in the churches that had been planted. Barnabas wanted to bring along his nephew Mark, but this was unacceptable to Paul because Mark had forsaken them in Pamphylia and had not remained faithful. Barnabas wanted to give his nephew another chance, but for Paul the risk was too great. The argument got heated and, despite all that they had been through, they were unable to come to one mind. The result was that Paul took Silas, and Barnabas took Mark, and they went their separate ways. We do know that God glories in redeeming broken things, and He did just that in all three of these men's lives. There were now two missionary endeavors rather than one and there was an incredible transformation in Paul and Mark's relationship down the road. But that is for another study. (See what Paul requests as he nears the end of his life in 2 Timothy 4:9-11)

Strategy Regarding Timothy (16:1-5)

In our last study, we looked at the role circumcision had played in the early church and answered the question of whether or not it was necessary for salvation (a resounding NO!) But in this section we see Paul's strategy regarding Timothy was to have him circumcised. Why would he do this after such pains in the section before? Paul's modus operandi was to go straight to the synagogues and preach Jesus as the Messiah. Timothy's mother was Jewish, and if Timothy was going to join him without being circumcised, it would certainly cause a major problem for Paul, and an unnecessary stumbling block for the Jews. Once he was circumcised, Paul, Silas and Timothy were able to freely share the result of the Jerusalem council, and the church was strengthened and increased.

Strategy Corrected by the Spirit (16:6-10)

Occasionally Paul's missions strategy was not completely in line with God's desires, and the Holy Spirit would redirect where Paul was heading. Paul wanted to go down into Asia and into Bithynia, but God wanted them to go up into Macedonia. Thankfully Paul listened and allowed his plans to be corrected. It is also in this section that Luke, the author of Acts, joined Paul.

Strategy In Philippi (16:11-15)

It would seem that there wasn't a synagogue in Philippi, so Paul found a place where Jews would gather to pray and began his work there, starting with the conversion of Lydia and her household.

Philippi Strategy Upended (16:16-24)

Paul's ministry in Philippi was met with spiritual resistance as a demon possessed girl continued to bother Paul day after day. It seems like Paul was aware of what might happen if he healed her, so it wasn't until he was fed up with her disruption that he cast the demon out. This began a chain of events that landed a beaten Paul and Silas in prison.

Strategy Regarding Incarceration (16:25-34)

Here we see Paul's strategy while incarcerated. Despite the circumstances, he and Silas spend the night praying and praising God! Their actions were so incredible to the other inmates, that when God shook the earth and the prison opened, no one dashed out to freedom, but all seemed to wait for further instruction from Paul! This fact allowed Paul to save the life of the Jailer in more ways than one! Not only did the man not kill himself, but he also ended up believing in God along with his household!

Political Strategy (16:35-40)

Paul knew he had the political leaders of Philippi over a barrel. Paul was a Roman citizen, and it would be troublesome if word got out that they had beaten him and thrown into jail without even a trial! Paul used their major political mistake to his advantage and even got them to come and apologize to him! This in some sense gave Paul free reign in Philippi, and we see him take his time before heading out to Thessalonica.

In our study today there are a few things that stand out to me. First, how real and human Luke portrays these characters. They are not perfect little angels. They disagreed, made mistakes, had to apologize and forgive one another, and be corrected by the Spirit. This should give us confidence in the scriptures. The records are real and trustworthy and don't seek to hide the blemishes. Secondly, I am struck by how strategic Paul was in his mission. He knew where he wanted to go and what he wanted to do when he got there. (With some Holy Spirit correction of course). It is also instructive to us that even when his carefully laid strategy was upended, he prayed, praised God, and looked for the next opportunity.

Monthly Mission Team Meeting: Tonight @ 5:30 in the modular

Womens Gala: Dec 3rd, 6-8pm. Tickets available November 6th
at Womens Kiosk on the patio. \$20. Spots are limited