

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part VI: The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its Spread To The Ends Of The Earth, Acts 8:26-28:31

E. Christ's Use Of The Apostle Paul To Spearhead Worldwide Outreach, Acts 14:4-28:31

11. Christ's Use Of Biblically Credible Circumstances For Ministry Guidance

(Acts 16:6-12)

I. Introduction

- A. In the days of the Apostle Paul, God's guidance often came directly through the Lord's providing visible appearances to various Christian leaders such as Stephen in Acts 7:55-56 or Peter in Acts 12:6-11.
- B. However, we believe such **direct** experiential guidance has either completely ceased or is highly unlikely now since the canon of Scripture is sufficient to guide us today in all godly works (2 Timothy 3:16-17), so any New Testament example of God's leading by ***Biblically sanctioned* INDIRECT circumstances** as we believe He often guides us today is worth our careful note, and we have such a passage in Acts 16:6-10:

II. Christ's Use Of Biblically Credible Circumstances For Ministry Guidance, Acts 16:6-12.

- A. On Paul's second missionary journey from his "home" Church in Antioch of Syria (Acts 15:30-32, 36, 41), he traveled west northwest from his "home" Church to Derbe, Lystra and Iconium, strengthening the believers in Phrygia and Galatia who he evangelized on his first missionary journey, Acts 15:36; 16:1-6a; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., map 13, "The Missionary Journeys of Paul."
- B. After this, Paul and Silas attempted to travel north into the heart of the Roman province of Asia, but the Holy Spirit restricted them from ministering there, Acts 16:6b.
- C. This was an unusual restriction, for Christ had directed that His apostles disciple all nations in Acts 1:8, and after Paul and Silas' journey, Christians were scattered throughout Asia, cf. 1 Peter 1:1.
- D. When they reached the realm of Mysia on the south side of the Marmara Sea that in turn was south of the Black Sea, Paul and Silas tried to go north into Bithynia that bordered the Black Sea, but the "Spirit of Jesus" again unusually did not let them go there, Acts 16:7 NIV, ESV; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, Map 13.
- E. Remarkably, God also wanted people in Bithynia evangelized, for Peter's first Epistle was later written to believers scattered throughout Pontus and Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, cf. 1 Peter 1:1!
- F. Nevertheless, since there had ***repeatedly*** been **no** directive from the Lord as to **where** they ***should*** go, and since they had been kept by God from ministering in both Asia and Bithynia, Paul and Silas traveled west until they came to Troas beside the Aegean Sea, Acts 16:8.
- G. At Troas, Paul received a vision during the night in which a man from Macedonia across the Aegean Sea was standing and asking Paul to come over to Macedonia to help him and his people, Acts 16:9.
- H. Since God had kept Paul and Silas from ministering in Asia and Bithynia, and since this vision pointed them across the Aegean Sea west by northwest, the same direction God had been leading them to go from the "home" Church in Antioch of Syria in discipling the previous Churches (*Ibid.*, Ryrie, map 13), Paul and Silas together concluded God was thus calling them to preach the gospel in Macedonia, Acts 16:10.
- I. Thus, they took a ship from Troas to the region of Macedonia, Acts 16:11-12.

Lesson: *The Lord provided a clear EXAMPLE of BIBLICALLY-SANCTIONED CIRCUMSTANTIAL GUIDANCE for Christians by His CIRCUMSTANTIAL guidance of Paul and Silas to go to Macedonia (as follows): (1) God led by UNUSUAL, REPEAT RESTRICTIONS of Paul and Silas; (2) God led by way of CLEAR PRECEDENTS, directing Paul and Silas in a west by northwesterly route from their "home" Church in accord with the direction He had led them on their first missionary journey and (3) God led by way of a VISION, an EVENT that FIT God's CLEAR BIBLICAL RESTRICTIONS and PRECEDENTS to that date.*

Application: *We can recognize God's CIRCUMSTANTIAL guidance of us today by way of (1) His UNUSUAL, REPEAT RESTRICTIONS of our efforts or intentions in some way, (2) by His ALIGNING us with HIS PAST PROVEN PRECEDENTS of guidance in our lives and by (3) His aligning any OTHER circumstantial event [such as an article we read, or a comment by a fellow believer, etc.] with His UNUSUAL, REPEAT RESTRICTIONS and past PRECEDENTS in our lives!*