The Book of Acts Lesson 31

Acts 16:1-15

“The Spirit Leads Laborers to People”

Introduction:

1. A friendship begins in Lystra. V. 1-5
2. The letter of 1Timothy is filled with commands and primarily deals with responsibilities and advice from Paul, but as Paul nears the end of his life (IITim.4:6) it is very clear that Timothy is very special to him. IITimothy 1:2-5 ..*dearly beloved.., ..without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers.., ..greatly desiring to see thee.. that I may be filled with joy.., ..unfeigned faith that is in thee..*
3. This friendship is not something that happened by chance, God brought these two men together as Paul was following His will in being a blessing to churches.
4. Godly friends are a blessing from the Lord.
   1. Thank God for friends who encourage you in your walk with the Lord.
   2. “Familiarity breeds contempt” – Plato
      1. Don’t take your friends for granted.
      2. Don’t mistreat your friends because you think they’ll always be there.
   3. If you don’t have godly friends yet remember that God will place them in your path as long as you are following him.
      1. Building relationships with godly people will only happen if you are involved in church.
         1. Do you leave immediately after the preaching is done?
         2. Do you ever go out soul-winning?
         3. Are you faithful to your Sunday school class?
         4. Following God’s will for your life will naturally bring the blessing of friends across your path.
      2. Friendships do not happen overnight, we have to invest in them and protect them, just like any other relationship.

Transition: Our friendships, like Paul and Timothy’s should be a blessing to others. In this case God used Paul to mentor Timothy in the ministry. This was all a result of Paul following the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

1. The Holy Spirit’s role in the work of missions. V. 6-10
2. The directing function of the Holy Spirit is seen in verses six and seven.
   1. He kept them from preaching the gospel in Asia (western Turkey)?
      1. It is clear that God intends the gospel to go everywhere in Matthew 28:19-20
      2. But God’s timetable is not always like ours.
3. This was not something unique to Paul as an apostle, we are all directed by the Holy Spirit.
   1. This is not an audible direction.
   2. This is not based primarily on feelings.
   3. It is based on the peace that God gives us, which comes from several things:
      1. His Word speaking to us
      2. Godly counselors whose spirits bear witness with what God is doing (they agree)
      3. Our own conscience will tell us if His “direction” came during a time when we were walking close to God or rebelling against Him.
      4. Circumstances will lead us to what God is doing (God will open the doors).
4. The important thing about finding out what God wants for you is that you also be willing to obey whatever that is.
   1. It may be that God is telling you to wait because you still have to get rid of some things in your life.
   2. Don’t be one of those who know God has called them but refuse to follow because it takes too much faith.
5. People are the aim of the mission.
   1. The people of Macedonia needed the gospel and God worked to send someone to them.
   2. The need for the gospel is everywhere.
      1. There is STILL a need in Macedonia.
      2. There is a need in your workplace.
      3. There is a need in El Paso
   3. The task is greater than us, this is why we need to remember that the Holy Spirit acts as the Superintendent of His children and will direct us wherever He wants us to go. He loves people more than we really know and will work to see them saved.
   4. We can very easily forget that God wants us to change people’s lives. Whose life has been changed because of your influence?

Transition: Many people believe that being a Christian is all boredom and thou shalt nots. Even many Christians believe that if they surrender to God’s will He will send them to the mud pits of Africa or the frozen tundra. The truth is that surrendering to God’s will is the most wonderful thing we can do with our lives.

1. Paul’s group is led to good ground. V.11-15
2. It is unquestionable that God’s servants suffer hardship in this life.
   1. II Corinthians 11:24-28
   2. II Timothy 3:12
3. But when people’s lives are changed it makes it all worthwhile.
4. Although scores of people in this world are antagonistic to the gospel, there are many others who are thirsting and hungering for God’s Word.
5. A gentile woman named Lydia was an independent woman when that was a rare thing, and God spoke to her heart as Paul preached the gospel.
   1. Remember that it is God who does the work when we share the gospel.
   2. Remember that we never know how someone is going to respond when we present the gospel to them. This is why we should never judge or discriminate who we share the gospel with or invite to church.

Conclusion: What is God’s will for your life? This can seem like a daunting question, especially if you are in a time of transition. God is not the author of confusion and wants you to know His will. But the process of finding that out, much like everything else that God wants from us will require faith. If you are in the midst of uncertainty remember that God knows your innermost thoughts and the number of hairs on your head, if you end up making the wrong decision it will never be because God just couldn’t figure out how to get the message across to you. If you are doing what you know to do, keep doing that until you know what to do, and don’t be surprised if God leads you to people who need to hear the gospel from you.