

Introduction (Acts 15:36-41)

How many of you like to plan your vacations? I love planning vacations. I love putting together a travel plan. I like to plan where we will stay, and what we will do in each place. When Karen and I were younger, we use to take camping vacations. For a large family, it was fairly economical. We had a pop-up camper that slept seven people, and a tent that Karen and I used. We tried to hit different amusement parks every summer. We went to places like Six Flags over Georgia in Atlanta, or the Carowinds in Charlotte. We also liked to camp in scenic places like Cherokee, Tennessee, which is in the Blue Ridge Mountains. We liked Stone Mountain in Atlanta. For me, it was fun to research all the things that we could do, and then make the necessary plans and arrangements.

When I played professional golf, we use to travel a lot as a family. After long stretches on the road, we were always ready to get back home and sleep in our own beds. But, after being home for a while, we were ready to go out again. Paul and Barnabas finished up the first apostolic journey in Acts 14. After they had reported back to those that had commended them to the work, they spent a long time with the disciples. But, after being home for a long while, they were ready to go out again.

(Acts 14:28) "And they spent a long time with the disciples."

While they were in Antioch spending time with the disciples, some men from Judea came down teaching the brethren that they had to be circumcised in order to be saved. They upset the faith of many. False teaching has several negative effects. It upsets the faith of people. It also leads to bondage and sin. Truth sets people free, but false teaching has the opposite effect. Barnabas and Paul confronted them, and then they went to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders. After much debate, they came to an agreement about this particular doctrine. The Gentiles did not need to be circumcised. It is by faith that you and I are saved, not by works or keeping the law. Jesus fulfilled the law, and set us free from the law.

(Acts 15:1-2) "Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." {2} And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue."

When they returned from Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord. But this is not what they have been called to do. Paul was a chosen instrument to bear witness to the Gentiles and to kings. The time of rest had been good, but Paul was growing restless, and ready to go out again. It was time to plan his next trip.

(Acts 15:35) "But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord."

Today's message is about the planning of Paul's second apostolic trip. Paul was a man who planned. We see in Romans 1:13 that Paul had often planned to visit them, but he had been prevented from doing so. Paul understood that God expects us to plan our ways, and that God was sovereign, and could redirect our steps at any time. In Proverbs 16:1, Solomon said that the plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue belong to God.

(Rom 1:13) "I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

(Pr 16:1) "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD."

Solomon also said that the mind of the man plans his way but the Lord directs his feet. Paul had been prevented from going to Rome. Paul's life was submitted to the Lord, and God could redirect him any time He wanted. Paul was God's servant. We also see in Acts 16 that Paul was directed in a vision to go to Macedonia. Lydia and her household, and the jailer and his household received the gospel because Paul was willing for God to redirect his feet. He had not planned to go to Philippi, but he allowed God to change his plans. The plans of the heart belong to man, and we have to plan our ways, but we also have to allow God to direct our feet.

(Pr 16:9) "The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps."

Solomon also said to commit our works to the Lord and our plans will be established. The brethren committed Paul and Silas to the work, and their plans were going to be established. Paul is a wonderful example of a man who understood his God-given responsibility of planning, yet who submitted his plans and work to the Lord, and was often redirected by the Holy Spirit.

(Pr 16:3 Commit your works to the LORD And your plans will be established."

(Acts 15:40) "But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord."

In our text today, we find three key parts to Paul's plans for his second apostolic journey. First, we will look at the purpose of the trip. Second, we will look at the participants of the trip. Barnabas and Paul had a pretty big disagreement about who could come on the trip. Third, we will look at the places they planned to visit. Let's read our text for today.

Planning of Paul's Second Apostolic Journey

1. Purpose
2. Partners
3. Places

(Acts 15:36-41) "After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." {37} Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. {38} But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. {39} And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. {40} But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. {41} And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches."

1. Purpose

A. Visit the brethren.

There were two purposes for the trip. **The first purpose of the trip was to visit the brethren.** The Greek word for visit is episkeptomai (Strong's G1980), which means to inspect, or to look carefully. (epi – upon & skopos – to look)

(Acts 15:36, 41) “After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.... {41} And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”

Paul and Barnabas had spent a year and a half of their lives investing in these churches. They had a vested interest in what was going on. They had sown lots of seeds and they wanted to check on the crops. They had planted a number of vineyards, and they wanted to see what kind of fruit these churches were producing. Paul had ordained elders in all these churches. The Scriptures teach us not to lay hands on someone hastily and share in the responsibility for their sins. Paul felt a responsibility to check on the elders he had ordained. The people that Paul raised up in these churches were not seasoned Christians; they were all new Christians. Paul preached to the Jews first, so many of the people that came to the Lord knew the Scriptures. Many of them would have been wise and mature people. But, all of them were new to the Christian life, and so it was very important for Paul to visit them and inspect what was going on.

(1 Tim 5:22) “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.”

There is an old saying that we should always inspect what we expect. Management consultants have taught for a long time that we must inspect the things that are important. People need to know that the things that they are giving their life to are important and meaningful. Inspecting those things reminds them of the importance of the work they are doing. They also teach us that we must inspect the things that we have agreed upon. Inspecting what you have agreed upon keeps people accountable. I have found that setting clear expectations, and putting things in writing is critical. It helps us remember what was agreed upon.

B. Strengthen the Brethren

The second purpose for the trip was to strengthen the churches. There are a number of ways to strengthen churches. The first way of strengthening churches is with encouragement. Eighteen years ago I gave a message on encouragement, and I went through all the various words that are used. There are lots of different Hebrew and Greek words that are translated as encouragement. I wanted to help our congregation learn how to encourage one another and to begin practicing encouragement. Encouragement can come from affirmation of what they are doing. Encouragement can come from sharing timely and relevant Scriptures that build up and give hope to people. Encouragement can come from casting vision. Encouragement can also come by just being with people. When God wanted to encourage Joshua as the new leader of Israel, He told him, “Be strong and of good courage, for I am with you.” Knowing that God was with him and was going to be with him brought great confidence and encouragement to young Joshua.

(Acts 15:41) “And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”

(Josh 1:9) "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

I will never forget what the Holy Spirit told me one day as I was driving to the prison where I served as a chaplain. I had probably spent twenty hours of preparation on a message that I was going to give that day. And, I was praying about my time at the prison that day on my drive there. The Holy Spirit said, "It's not what you are going to teach that will impact them; it is just being with them." This was not a rebuke from the Lord. This was not to minimize the importance of teaching sound doctrine, and how truth sets people free. It is important to study and to teach. But, it was a great reminder of how important just being with people is. People don't care what you know until they know you care. Ministry flows out of relationship. And spending time with these inmates who were depressed and discouraged was a big encouragement to them. When I was with them, I would listen to them. Listening is very important. I would pray with them. They were encouraged by someone caring and praying for them. We can strengthen churches through encouragement.

Men, the men in the church need encouragement. Women, the women in the church need encouragement. Children's workers, the children in the church need encouragement. Life Group Leaders, the members of your groups need regular encouragement. We need to find ways to encourage those who are ministering with us in the various ministries in the church.

One of the priorities in Paul's ministry was to meet with the leadership teams. Leaders are always encouraging others, but they rarely get much encouragement themselves. Paul made a point of meeting with the leaders and encouraging them. An example of this is in Acts 20, where Paul called for the Ephesian elders. He did not meet with the church; he just met with the elders. They came to him at Miletus and he exhorted and encouraged them.

Encouragement is a great way of strengthening churches. Another way is with sound teaching. Good foundational teaching is needed to strengthen churches. Another way to strengthen the church is to equip them for the work of service. In Ephesians 4, Paul tells leaders to equip the saints for the work of service. When the saints are equipped, and each part is working properly, the church is built up and strengthened.

(Eph 4:12-16) "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ... {16} from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

Another way to strengthen churches is to impart spiritual gifts. In Romans 1:, Paul said that he longed to come to them so that he could impart a spiritual gift to them. He wanted to lay hands on them and impart a gift that was missing in the church. Paul wanted to go inspect the work that was going on, and he wanted to encourage and strengthen the churches that he had planted.

(Rom 1:11-12) "For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; {12} that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine."

2. Partners

A. Paul and Barnabas

The bulk of our passage today is about the selection of team members. Paul begins the conversation by saying to Barnabas, “let US return and visit the brethren in every city in which WE proclaimed the word of the Lord. Paul was not wanting to break up this very successful team. His desire was for both of them to continue ministering together. Barnabas was the one that vouched for him in Jerusalem, which allowed Paul to attach himself to the saints there. It was Barnabas that went to Tarsus and brought him to Antioch, and together they had ministered very effectively. Considerable numbers of people were brought to Christ, and disciplined. It was the Holy Spirit that had called Barnabas and Paul to the work that God had for them. This had been a great team. They had worked well together for many years. **Paul wanted to continue to work together with Barnabas.**

(Acts 15:36) “After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”

Before I go on to speak about John Mark and Silas, I want to point out a small detail. **Every team must have a team leader.** At Antioch, Barnabas was the leader that the apostles had put over the new work. On the first apostolic trip, Barnabas was the leader. Paul may have done the bulk of the preaching and teaching, but Barnabas was the leader. Because he was the leader, Luke generally lists Barnabas first when the two of them are mentioned. But, in Acts 15:35, Luke writes, “but Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.” Their first apostolic trip is over. Now, Paul is mentioned first, because he was the more prominent teacher and leader. I believe he had a greater mantle on him. I believe that he was the greatest apostle and leader in the New Testament. At some point, Paul was going to begin leading the team, rather than being under Barnabas. I believe this transition takes place in Acts 15:35. It was now Paul and Barnabas. And, it is now Paul saying to Barnabas, “let us return and visit the brethren.” Paul has taken the lead. As the leader, he has the final say about team decisions. Barnabas has been the leader, and the one with the final say. He is not use to being the second fiddle.

(Acts 15:35) “But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.”

B. John Mark

When Paul approached Barnabas about the second trip, Barnabas wanted to take John Mark on the trip, and Paul insisted that they should not take John Mark with them because he had deserted them on the first trip. Whose final decision was it to make? It was Paul's final decision, and he insisted on not taking John Mark with them. Barnabas was not willing to go along with that decision. Luke records that they had such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another. Barnabas would not submit to Paul and his decision, and so he chose who he wanted and sailed away to Cyprus. I believe Barnabas was really upset and left in a hurry. When Paul left, he was committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. Luke does not say that about Barnabas and Mark. There is a right way and a wrong way to leave. It is better to leave with a blessing rather than to just get angry and leave somewhere. When God moves people to another congregation, I believe we should pray for them and bless them. Unfortunately, most people just get angry and leave.

(Acts 15:38-40) “Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. {38} But

Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. {39} And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. {40} But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.”

Why was Paul so insistent that John Mark not accompany them? Why was Barnabas so insistent that he accompany them on the second trip? I want to answer these questions. First, if we go back to Acts 12, Peter was imprisoned. James had just been beheaded, and Peter was next in line to be executed. Fervent prayer was being made on his behalf by the church. The church was meeting in the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was called Mark. This prayer meeting took place at John Mark's house. It does not mention Mary and someone else; it only mentions Mary. I believe she was a wealthy widow. She apparently had a large house where many people could gather. I believe that John Mark did not have a father.

(Acts 12:12) “And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.”

In Acts 11, the church at Antioch is planted. Some prophets came from Jerusalem and prophesied about a famine which was going to take place. The church at Antioch took a collection and sent Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem to deliver that offering. At the end of Acts 12, after delivering the offering, they returned from Jerusalem to Antioch. Barnabas and Paul took John Mark back with them to Antioch.

(Acts 12:25) “And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.”

Why did Barnabas bring John Mark back with him to Antioch? In Colossians, Paul writes, “Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him).” Barnabas is John Mark's cousin. I believe that because Barnabas was related to John Mark, he took him under his wings to mentor and be a father to him. **Barnabas took John under his wing to mentor and disciple, as a father would a son.**

(Col 4:10) “Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him);”

There is another way of interpreting John Mark's background. 1 Peter 5, Peter wrote, “she who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.” Some would say that Mark could be Peter's son. In Luke's account of the prayer meeting in Acts 12, that would make Mary, Peter's wife. We know that Peter was married, but we are never given the name of his wife. I believe if Mary was Peter's wife, then Luke would have stated that in Acts 12. He would have said that it was at Peter and Mary's house, not Mary's house. That is too big of a detail to leave out of the text. Therefore, I do not believe Mary is Peter's husband, and I do not believe that Mark is Peter's biological son. I believe that Mark is a spiritual son of Peter's, not a biological son. There are lots of things that we will know fully some day.

(1 Pet 5:13) “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does

my son, Mark.”

So, while they were in Antioch, Barnabas is pouring into John Mark. On their first apostolic journey, they took John Mark as their helper. I don't think they took him because he was a powerful minister of the gospel. I believe they took him because Barnabas had taken responsibility for him for his Aunt Mary. Barnabas was going to take John Mark with him wherever he went.

(Acts 13:5) “When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.”

On the first trip, they first went to Cyprus, which is where Barnabas was from. At Paphos, they had an eye-opening experience with Elymas, the sorcerer. Elymas had opposed their work, and was trying to keep the governor from believing. This was a power encounter, and greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world. God wins every time. The sorcerer was blinded and had to be led around by others. I believe this spooked John Mark. This was pretty heavy stuff. When Barnabas and Paul caught the ship to Perga, John left them and caught a ship back to Jerusalem. This is my interpretation of what happened. I could be wrong about this theory. John may have just been home sick and wanted to go home and see his mother. Luke does not tell us why John deserted Barnabas and Paul, only that he did.

(Acts 13:13) “Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem.”

The term deserted is a strong word. When someone deserts in the military, it is a serious crime. In time of war, desertion can result in death. At other times, a court martial or dishonorable discharge is usually the punishment. From a military standpoint, Paul's decision would have been quite appropriate. John should have been discharged from the team. But, from a father's standpoint, you want your son to have a second chance. I believe this was Barnabas' heart. He wanted to give him another chance, continue to work with him, and help him to become a faithful man of God.

I believe that Barnabas accomplished his goal. **John Mark became a very faithful man.** In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he tells him to pick up Mark and bring him, for he is useful to Paul for service. John had matured, and become a very faithful man. He was now recognized as being useful to Paul. Barnabas had done a remarkable job mentoring John.

(2 Tim 4:11) “Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.”

I want to make one final comment about John Mark. In Philemon, Paul refers to John Mark as one of his fellow workers. John Mark was not only useful, but he eventually became a part of Paul's apostolic team. This is a tremendous honor and commendation for John Mark. Paul had acknowledged John Mark's faithfulness, and brought him on board as a fellow worker.

(Philemon 1:23-24) “Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, {24} as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.”

Before I get to Silas, I want to make a comment about a philosophy of ministry. Most churches

require prospective pastors to submit their philosophy of ministry with their application. It is an important thing to consider. There were doctrinal differences in Acts 15 that needed to get ironed out. Through much debate, they came to a resolution. I think differences in a philosophy of ministry can be just as tough, if not tougher to resolve. For example, you might be convinced that the best way to reach people is with seeker services. I happen to believe that we want to be seeker friendly, but the job of the pastor is to equip the saints for the work of service. I believe we are commanded to go and make disciples. I don't want to water down my teaching. I don't want to water down the worship. I want to help all of you grow and mature. My experience at seeker friendly services is that people are entertained rather than fed. I do not want to give my life to entertaining folks. I want to lay my life down to proclaim Him, and to admonish and teach every man so that I can present every man complete in Christ. Those are two very different philosophies of ministry.

Paul's philosophy of ministry was to build with faithful men. He wanted to invest in faithful men. He told Timothy to take the things that he had heard from Paul and to entrust these things to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. That was how Paul wanted to build. John Mark had not been faithful. Taking John Mark with him did not line up with his philosophy of ministry.

(2 Tim 2:2) "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

On the other hand, Barnabas' philosophy of ministry was to encourage others. He was a prophet. He took Paul and brought him before the apostles, and vouched for Paul. He did what he could to raise up those who were not yet accepted. He saw potential in others and helped to develop that potential. Whereas Paul wanted to work with those that had proven to be faithful, Barnabas wanted to work with those who had potential but were not there yet. We need both ministries. Both ministries produced incredible fruit. But, it made it very difficult for them to continue working together.

C. Silas

Since Paul and Barnabas did not agree on John Mark, Barnabas took him and departed for Cyprus. Paul chose Silas, and after being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord, he began his trip to visit all the churches where they had proclaimed the word of the Lord. Who is Silas? Let's take a look at this man that Paul chose to minister with him on this second trip.

(Acts 15:40) "But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord."

Sometimes Silas is referred to as Sylvanus, and sometimes as Silas, his nickname. Sometimes I am a Bill, and sometimes I am called William. William is my real name, but I rarely use it. Sylvanus is referred to as Silas most of the time. **Silas was one of the leading men among the brethren in Jerusalem.** The church in Jerusalem was around 50,000 people, so to be considered one of the leading men of that large church was really saying something. He was a leading man among the brethren, who are elders. So, Silas was an elder in the church at Jerusalem. He was a pastor and overseer. That meant that he was a man whose character was above reproach. He was a man of the word. He was a good manager. He met all the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-8.

(Acts 15:22) "Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to

choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,”

In Acts 15:32, we find that **Silas was a prophet**. Paul had teamed up with Barnabas, who was a prophet. Now, he teamed up with Silas, who was also a prophet. It seems that prophets and teachers work very well together. Their ministries balance one another. Karen's prophetic gifting is a wonderful balance to my teaching ministry. After the doctrinal decision was made by the apostles in Jerusalem, Silas traveled to Antioch with Barnabas, Paul, and Judas to communicate that decision. Luke records that Silas encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. Then, after giving spending some time there, he decided to stay in Antioch.

(Acts 15:32-34) “Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. {33} After they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. {34} But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.”

One of the purposes of Paul's second trip was to encourage the churches. The main purpose of prophecy is to encourage the saints. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14 that prophecy is to comfort, exhort, and to encourage. Choosing a prophet makes perfect sense. Silas would be able to encourage these other churches, just as he had encouraged the Antioch church.

(1 Cor 14:3) “But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.”

In addition to being a prophet, **Silas was a very faithful man**. In Peter's letter, he writes, “through Silvanus, our faithful brother, for so I regard him, I have written to you.” That is a great commendation from Peter. When people think about me, I would want them to say the same thing, that Bill is a faithful brother. I want to be faithful with my wife. I want to be faithful with my responsibilities. I want to be faithful in my calling. I want to be a faithful steward of my money. I don't pressure people to give here at church. I want people to be faithful in every area of their life, and that includes their handling of money and their honoring of the Lord with their tithes and offerings. I encourage people to be faithful and obedient, and to sow generously into God's work. Silas was a faithful brother. Paul wanted to work with faithful men, and Silas was a perfect choice.

(1 Pet 5:12) “Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!

Silas is also a worshiper. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were arrested in Philippi and put in prison. At midnight, they were praying and singing hymns of praise to God. Prayer and worship go together. Both prayer and worship usher in the presence and power of God. We have had some people in our church that wanted prolonged times of worship, but were very much against our corporate prayer. They did not understand how important prayer is in seeing the miraculous power of God released into our lives and ministries. Silas was a worshiper, who spent time praying and singing.

(Acts 16:25) “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;”

In Revelation 5:8, the twenty four elders had a harp and a golden bowl of incense. The harp

represents praise, and the incense is the prayers of the saints. Paul and Silas were both worshipers, and had intimate fellowship with the Lord. My desire for all of us is to have intimacy with the Lord. I encourage everyone to spend time in the word, spend time in prayer, spend time worshiping, to spend time listening to the Lord. These activities help us develop intimacy with the Lord.

(Rev 5:8) "When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."

Silas not only traveled with Paul, but he also helped with the follow up. He and Timothy helped Paul write the letters to the church in Thessalonica. Paul signed the letters with his own handwriting, but he usually had one of his team members write the bulk of the letters.

(1 Thess 1:1) "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace."

(2 Thess 1:1) "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:"

Paul had a clear purpose for his second trip. He wanted to visit or inspect the work in those churches, and he wanted to strengthen the churches. He now had his traveling partner chosen. He would add Luke and others to his team later, but for now, he had his team chosen. Now, let's look at the places on his trip.

3. Places

The passage begins with Paul telling Barnabas that he wanted to return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord. On their first trip, they preached the word in Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, and Perga. They set sail from Attalia, but they did not preach the word there. The only cities that Paul preached at on his first trip that he did not go to on the second trip were the cities on the island of Cyprus. Barnabas and Paul had gone to Salamis and Paphos. But, when Barnabas and John Mark left Antioch, they went to Cyprus. I believe that Paul did not go there since Barnabas was visiting those cities.

(Acts 15:36) "After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."

The last verse of our passage tells us that they began traveling through Syria and Cilicia. Rather than taking a ship, they traveled by land. They were in Syria, and they made their way through Syria and Cilicia on their way to the cities that Paul had previously preached the word. Paul was from Tarsus, which is in Cilicia. Even though the word does not mention it, I believe he stopped by his home town on his way. Tarsus was on the road that went from Antioch to Derbe, so he would have had to go through his home town. I believe he stopped and visited friends and family before traveling on.

(Acts 15:41) "And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches."

Paul and Silas also visited some new cities that they had not previously gone to. In the next couple

of months, we will be looking at the various places that they traveled to. In our text today, they traveled through Syria and Cilicia. In Acts 16:1-5, they went to Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. In Acts 16:6-8, they went to Troas. In Acts 16:9-40, they went to Philippi. In Acts 17:1-9, they went to Thessalonica. In Acts 17:10-14, they went to Berea. In Acts 17:15-34, they went to Athens. In Acts 18:1-17, they went to Corinth, where they stayed for eighteen months. In Acts 18:18-21, they went to Ephesus. In Acts 18:22, they departed from Ephesus and sailed to Caesarea. From there, they traveled up to Antioch, where they had been commended to this second trip.

Acts 15:41 Syria and Cilicia
Acts 16:1-5 Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium
Acts 16:6-8 Troas
Acts 16:9-40 Philippi
Acts 17:1-9 Thessalonica
Acts 17:10-14 Berea
Acts 17:15-34 Athens
Acts 18:1-17 Corinth
Acts 18:18-21 Ephesus
Acts 18:22 Caesarea and Antioch

Conclusion

We are just beginning to study Paul's second apostolic journey. This morning we looked at his purpose, his partners, and the places he was going to visit. As we come to a close, I want to remind us of some applications. **First, people need follow-up.** When people come to know the Lord, they need follow-up. Barnabas and Paul gave some initial follow-up and were making disciples. Bill Bice is working on a corporate plan of discipleship, so we can do an effective job of follow-up on new believers. You will be hearing more about this in coming weeks.

Second, people need ongoing encouragement. Apostles do not just plant churches; they provide ongoing encouragement. They continue to strengthen churches. That was Paul's heart. He had the true heart of a spiritual father. But, all of us are called to encourage and strengthen one another. That is not just for apostles and pastors. Seek ways that you can encourage and strengthen the people that God has brought into your life. God wants our church to be a place of great encouragement. God wants us to be a place where you can grow and be strengthened in your faith. There are some core disciplines that will strengthen you. Spending time in the word, prayer, and fellowship will strengthen you. As pastors, we try to do a good job feeding you with the word of God. Sound doctrine strengthens a church.

Third, churches need faithful people. Paul insisted on faithful workers. Churches are built with faithful men and women. Some of us may be like John Mark, learning to be faithful. We need some Barnabas' in our lives to encourage us. It took John Mark some time, but he became a very faithful man. Encourage younger believers to be faithful. Be faithful in having daily devotions. Be faithful in your prayer life. Be faithful in attendance on Sundays. Be faithful to attend a small group. Be faithful in showing up on time. Be faithful in serving. Whether it is ushering, greeting, or some other ministry, be faithful. Be faithful in your giving. Honor God with your tithes and offerings, by giving your very best. We want to be faithful stewards of God's money.

Paul was picking a partner to team with for a trip. For those of you considering a partner for life, how much more important is this for you. Look for a man or woman that is faithful. Look for someone who handles their money faithfully. Look for someone who is faithful in their commitments. Look for someone who is faithful in their service to the Lord. Parents, when a young man has come to me asking for one of my daughters' hand in marriage, what do I look for? I look for faithfulness. Is this man faithful? Is he faithful in his work? Is he faithful in attending church? Is he faithful in his giving? Does he serve, and is he faithful in his service at church? Faithfulness in marriage is a very important thing. I have had to say no to a few young men. I have told them to get some life skills so they could faithfully provide. I have told them to learn to be faithful in their walk with the Lord. I have told them if they are not faithful now, how are they going to faithfully lead my daughter. Parents, faithfulness is important to look at when your young adults are looking at a partner for life.

Church, faithfulness is really important. Let's be a church full of faithful people. We will see the kingdom of God advanced in our community if we are faithful.

This morning, if you would like prayer for anything, we want to give you an opportunity to receive prayer. If you need a word of encouragement, raise your hand. We will have people around you pray for you. If you need prayer for healing, raise your hand. We will have people gather around you to pray for you. The effective fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much, so let us pray for you this morning.

Some of you may have been coming for a while, and believe that this is where God wants you to call your church home. If God is leading you to join our church, I want you to come forward. While other people are getting prayed for at their seats, please come forward.

Let's pray.

Introduction (Acts 14:28, 15:1-2, 15:35-41, Pr 16:1, 3, 9, Rom 1:13)**1. Purpose****A. Visit the brethren.**

- The first purpose of the trip was to visit the brethren. (Acts 15:36, 41, 1 Tim 5:22)

B. Strengthen the Brethren

- The second purpose for the trip was to strengthen the churches. (Acts 15:41, Josh 1:9, Eph 4:12-16, Rom 1:11-12)

2. Partners**A. Paul and Barnabas**

- Paul wanted to continue to work together with Barnabas. (Acts 15:36)
- Every team must have a team leader. (Acts 15:35)

B. John Mark (Acts 15:38-40, Acts 12:12, 12:25)

- Barnabas took John under his wing to mentor and disciple, as a father would a son. (Col 4:10, 1 Pet 5:13, Acts 13:5, 13:13)
- John Mark became a very faithful man. (2 Tim 4:11, Philemon 1:23-24)
- Paul's philosophy of ministry was to build with faithful men. (2 Tim 2:2)

C. Silas (Acts 15:40, 1 Thess 1:1, 2 Thess 1:1)

- Silas was one of the leading men among the elders in Jerusalem. (Acts 15:22)
- Silas was a prophet. (Acts 15:32-34, 1 Cor 14:3)
- Silas was a very faithful man. (1 Pet 5:12)
- Silas is also a worshiper. (Acts 16:25, Rev 5:8)

3. Places (Acts 15:36, 15:41)**Conclusion**

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