Spirit Led Living

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Acts 16:6-15

6 They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been
forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 When they had come
opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did
not allow them; 8 so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 During
the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with
him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 When he had
seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being
convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them. 11 We
set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following
day to Neapolis, 12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the
district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some
days. 13 On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we
supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the
women who had gathered there. 14 A certain woman named Lydia, a
worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a
dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what
was said by Paul. 15 When she and her household were baptized, she urged
us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at
my home." And she prevailed upon us.

1. Dr. Woo's Story

This morning, I'd like to share the story of a pastor that I've met since being in the Greater Boston area. His name is Dr. Woo. Dr. Woo grew up in Korea without going to church until he was 35 years old. At the time, he was a professor at MIT. He was living the dream and was happy teaching his students. After some time, he began to feel that he didn't have peace in his heart.

One day he visited his mother's church and learned that the Bible talked about his situation. Romans 3:16 &17 says, ***"Wherever they go, they leave ruin and destruction. They do not know how to live in peace"*** (CEV). Dr. Woo began to search for this peace. He began to go to church and studied the Bible. When he was 50 years old, he felt a call to ministry. He quit his job at MIT and went to seminary at Gordon Conwell. He was ordained at 56 years old. Dr. Woo today believes that it was the Holy Spirit that led his life's journey.

2. Paul's Missionary Journeys

Last week, we shared about how the Holy Spirit set Barnabas and Saul apart for missions and how the church at Antioch sent them out immediately following the call of the Holy Spirit. When Paul and Barnabas talked about their second missionary journey, they ended up going different ways. Barnabas wanted to bring John Mark with them, but Paul didn't think it was a good idea because John Mark left them in the middle of their journey in Pamphylia (Acts 15:38). The two missionaries went their separate ways, and Paul went on his second journey with Silas while Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus.

When Paul visited Derbe and Lystra, he met Timothy. He shared the decisions made in Jerusalem: the Gentiles do not have to be circumcised and obey the Jewish laws to be saved. Luke tells us that the churches in Derbe and Lystra grew daily in number (Acts 16:5). When Paul and Silas are visiting the churches, they experience something they never expected. Acts 16:6 says, "***They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia***."

We do not know how the Holy Spirit lets Paul and Silas know that they should not go into Asia Minor. But it is clear that they felt that the Spirit did not want them to go. The message could have been confusing to Paul and Silas. But Paul understands the reason later when he sees a vision one night. Verse 9 says, ***"During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'"*** We do not know who the man of Macedonia was, but he was desperate to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

This vision reminds us that there are people who are waiting to hear the good news, and God may be sending us to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Romans 10:14 says, ***"How are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?"*** The Holy Spirit gives Paul direction to preach the Gospel to the people in Philippi.

3. The Church at Philippi

Why does the Holy Spirit want Paul and Silas to visit Philippi first instead of other cities in Asia Minor? How does Paul's visit to Philippi impact people in Philippi? Philippi was a key city in the region of Macedonia (northern Greece today). Paul founded a church during this visit. Later, Paul sent a letter to the church in Philippi, the Letter to the Philippians. In the letter, he shows his deep love for them and thanks them for a gift they sent and encourages them not to give in when they are persecuted. The Holy Spirit knows how important the support of the church in Philippi will be for Paul's ministry.

Acts 16:13 and the following tell us that through Paul's preaching, Lydia, an influential merchant in the city, believed in Jesus. She became Paul's first European convert. Lydia brings her entire household to hear about Jesus, and they are baptized as a result. She begs for the opportunity to host Paul and Silas in her home. Besides Lydia, the demon-possessed slave girl (16:16-18) and the jailer (16:27-30) also become believers in Philippi. All of them become key supporters of his ministry. Paul's preaching in Philippi impacts all areas of society in the city and helps spread the gospel all over the world.

4. Following the Spirit's Direction

Have you ever experienced the Holy Spirit changing your perspective or direction in your life journey? While I was preparing my message last week, I felt like the Holy Spirit changed my view to prioritize the need for missions. As Christians, we believe in Jesus and are able to learn, pray, and grow in faith everyday. On the other hand, there are many non-believers around the world who need Jesus as soon as possible. They are spiritually in need of coming to the emergency room not only to be saved but also to live their lives as kingdom builders. Yet, I do not think most Christians have a sense of urgency at all.

As the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Silas to preach the gospel to Asia Minor and Macedonia, the Holy Spirit sends us to bring non-believers to the emergency room to save their lives. Have you ever thought that when our Sunday worship is over, we are being sent out to the mission field to save people's lives? One of the UMCs in Maine has this sign at the exit of the church. "You are now entering the Mission Field." We are like ambulance dispatchers. When the Spirit tells us where to go, we should go as soon as possible to bring them to the emergency room.

At the funeral for Billy Graham last Friday, one of Billy's sons said, "My father was 'F.A.T.' He was faithful, available, and teachable." To make sure that we are faithful, available, and teachable, we need to ask these questions. Are we being faithful to Jesus and the Spirit's direction? Are we available to how and when God wants to use us? And are we teachable to God's correction in our lives? If we can't say yes to these questions, we are not his faithful children.

If Paul didn't follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Christian church may have existed only in Asia Minor. But Paul's visit to Macedonia and travel to Philippi would later impact the spread of the gospel to Europe, North and South America, and every region in the world.

5. Conclusion

I am sure all of us prayed for safety and no damage of property from the nor'easter storm. We always pray to God asking for help. When God asks us for help, do we listen to His voice and help the Lord? Are we willing to have God change the direction of our lives whenever God wants to use us to do a work in this world?

Proverbs 16:9 says, "***The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps***." We might have the wonderful plan for our church and for ourselves. But God knows what the best direction that we need to go. As long as we follow the Holy Spirit's direction, our life will be much more fruitful than we ever expect.

6. Application

Recently I read a story about a Korean missionary to Uganda. His name is Song Injin. About 23 years ago, a bishop from Uganda visited Korea and he helped the bishop as an interpreter. When the bishop went back to Uganda, he invited Mr. Song to visit Uganda. When he visited Uganda, the bishop asked him to come and serve his people. He promised the bishop that he would pray about it because he was getting ready to go to India. When he prayed, he felt the Holy Spirit say, "Go to Uganda. Go to Uganda." The Holy Spirit changed his direction. He served Uganda for 21 years. I've heard that now 40% of population in Uganda is Christian. After he finished his missionary work in Uganda, he said that he was just a piece of the puzzle that God used to share His love with the people in Uganda.

What is the Spirit asking us to do today and going forward in our lives? Perhaps the Spirit is calling us to change our life's direction. Or perhaps the Spirit is calling us to keep doing what we have been doing. I hope our church can focus more on community outreach. That's what the early Christians and John Wesley did.

We are planning to invite an African Children's Choir on October 20, 2018. The choir is called Watoto Children's choir that consists of orphans from Uganda. I would like to make the children's concert an opportunity to invite people in the community. Also I hope during this summer our church can offer a fun event for those who come to the beach.

We do not have to wait until this summer and October. In a few weeks, we will be celebrating the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Invite them to sunrise service and a continental breakfast, and Easter Cantata. It will be one of the best opportunities to invite people to Christ. Whenever we have an event at church if we invite them, they would appreciate it and will experience God's amazing love.

Proverbs 19:21 says, "***We may make a lot of plans, but the Lord will do what he has decided***" (CEV). As long as we listen to what the Spirit says

to us, we will see amazing things. I pray that you and I live lives that are focused on what God is calling us to and live Spirit led lives for Jesus. Amen.