

2010 ACTS #18 CHAPTER 15 DEAD ENDS AND OPEN DOORS

Acts 15:36-40, 16:1-15

Friends as we start the fall some of you
are glad that the summer is over.
Its not been what you expected.
Some of you have had the door close to a job, or a relationship.
Others have had some major detours, kids off to school or college.
For some your road came to an end, a new illness, or death.
This message is for you.

We all have those days when we feel like the line has been broken.
Calls have been cut off.
Dreams have been crushed.
We parents feel that way often when raising our children.

Will Willimon, a United Methodist Bishop when he was Dead of at Duke University, got a call from a very upset parent. "I hold you personally responsible for this," he said. "Me?" Will asked.

The father was hot, upset because his graduate school bound daughter had just informed him that she was going to chuck it all ("throw it all away" the father described it) and go do mission work with the Methodist in Haiti. "Isn't that absurd!" shouted the father. "A BS degree in mechanical engineering from Duke and she's going to dig ditches in Haiti."

Dr. Willamen tongue in cheek said: "Well, I doubt that she's received much training in the Engineering Department for that kind of work, but she's probably a fast learner and will probably get the hang of ditch-digging in a few months,"

"Look," said the father, "this is no laughing matter. You are completely irresponsible to have encouraged her to do this. I hold you personally responsible," he said.

Then Dr. Willimon pointed out that these well-meaning parents were the ones who had started this ball rolling. THEY were the ones who had her baptized, read Bible stories to her, took her to Sunday School, let her go with the Methodist youth Fellowship, ski trips, and camps. Then Willimon said: "You're the one who introduced her to Jesus, not me."

The Father meekly said: "But all we ever wanted her to be was a Methodist."
David E. Leininger, Collected Sermons, Adapted from William Willimon, Pulpit Resources, September 10, 1995, p. 45.

We have all been disappointed by people.
We have all disappointed people.
That's just life.
It wasn't any different for Paul and Barnabas.

The Apostle Paul wanted to visit the 11 churches he had
Preached in and founded the preceding year.
Not bad for his first missionary journey.

³⁶Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Acts 15:36

Don't we all like to be encouraged?
To have someone check up on us.
To put their hand on our shoulders and give us that heads up pat.

I read about a University football coach who each year would privately talk to a new player at the beginning of football season. He told him, "I'm very impressed with your ability. If you work really hard this year, I think you're good enough to make it to the National Football League." He told this to every player on the team! You know what happened? He had the highest percentage of players of any University to make it into professional football.

Paul wanted to visit the 11 churches that he started.
To water the seed he had planted.
Encourage the young converts,
Who were surrounded by opposition, and superstition,

But Paul and Barnabas ran into a little disagreement.
Over who they should take along on the trip.

Verse 37. Barnabas determined to take with them John Mark. Acts 15:37

John Mark was his sister's son;
He was Barnabas nephew.
Blood runs thicker than water.

But "Paul," reminded Barnabas,
That his nephew Mark, had run off on their last trip.
Went back home when they needed him,

And Paul was not about to trust him again.

³⁸but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. Acts 15:38

We don't know the reason Mark abandoned them,
He was young, probably restless, one mistake.
Someone said: Life is like a shower, one wrong turn and you're in hot water.

How many time have we been quick to write someone off
Just because they have failed once.

But Barnabas was a man who took adversity and made it in to character.
He not only forgave John Marks crises of failure
But he made him into a new character.
Barnabas name meant-- Son of encouragement.

Shouldn't we all try to see the good in all things?
Wouldn't we all love to be known as an encourager?

In the book *In a Pit with A Lion*: Mark Batterson
Tells when he was a sophomore in high school he broke his ankle playing basketball.
Actually he was running down the court on a drill and he tripped over his own foot.
He said both my ankles and my ego were broken at the same time.
He said I questioned God why he has allowed it to happen.
When He could have kept it from happening.
He said the cast was on for four weeks.
So he spent four weeks hopping from class to class.
Most of his classes seem to be on the third floor and
So he hopped up and down flights of stairs after every period.
He said I was like a human pogo stick.
But as the healing occurred something else was happening.
He said; the Setback turned into a stepping stone.
You old basketball players remember that the Holy grail
in basketball was to dunk a basketball.
Mark could never do it. But
He dunked his first basketball while wearing a cast on his left ankle.
His body had simply compensated for its brokenness.
His right leg grew strong to compensate for the broken left ankle.
It was the brokenness that actually increased his capacity for basketball..
Out of adversity, came strength and success.

John Mark deserted the mission.
But in spite of this mistake, Barnabas took him back,
And it is Mark who wrote the very first Gospel of Jesus.
Called the Book of Mark.

You see just because you may have made a mistake
Doesn't mean God can't use you.

Jeremiah says: Can I not do with you, O House of Israel, just as this potter has done? When a vessel he was making was spoiled in the potter's hand, he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

And before we get down on ourselves.
We might ask what is God preparing us for?

Barnabas would not give up:
Paul would not let up.

They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus Act 15:39

Sometimes in the midst of difficulties
God is asking us to rethink, to relearn.

We get so used to doing life the same way.
 Going in the same direction.
 That our minds are like a computer virus,
 They have been infected with irrational fears and misconceptions
 That keep us from operating the way we were designed to.

How many times did you read where Jesus said:
 You have heard that it was said, BUT I say unto you.
 Maybe Barnabas remember Jesus words
 You have heard that it was said: **Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you; love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:43-44**

So Barnabas took John Mark, and sailed to Cyprus:
 Paul took Silas, and went into Syria.
**But Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.
⁴¹He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Acts 15:40-41**

To all human appearance it seem a broken mission,
 But to God's point of view it was a slam dunk
 The mission trip wasn't cancelled ,
 There were just two teams instead of one,
 And God's word spread twice as fast and twice as far.

Was there any sin in this split, this disagreement of opinion?
 Well I can see no evidence in the Biblical text.
 What we do see is that
 we can disagree as Christian over who and how to do things.
 We can have a good discussion over styles of worship,
 Over mission statements, and church style shows and functions, and mission projects,
 without sinning against one another.

Much stress has been laid upon this,
⁴⁰**but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.**
 to show that Barnabas was in the *wrong*, because
 But we have no proof that Barnabas and Mark were not commended as well.
 What we do have is Dr. Luke wrote the book of Acts
 Traveled with Paul and Not Barnabas,
 So Dropped the story of Barnabas and Mark

The Bible Commentator McGee fills in the missing details,
 "Barnabas and John Mark went to Cyprus and there he had a great ministry.
 Barnabas had come from Cyprus; it was his home.
 We know from tradition that they had a great ministry,
 And carried it on from Cyprus into North Africa.

Dr. Luke simply says they agreed to go their separate way.

Both disciples did not And not criticize and gossip and spread rumors
 About one another.
 Instead they brought a new strength, truth, and a foundation to the church.
 It says they grew daily in numbers.

So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers. Acts 16:5

When truth wins out
 Souls are saved.
 When falsehood, bullying and gossip, and pride wins out.
 Souls are confused and deceived.

Often, it is the same way today in our church.
 When we have a conflict, rumors abound
 Instead of finding out the truth,
 We make quick judgments,
 Draw our lines in the sand.
 Pool our hurts and bruised egos.
 And become a hindrance to the good news.
 And the Love of God doesn't reach the world like it should.
 It doesn't reach those who are watching the church
 Watching the Christian to see how they act and how they live.
 What was meant for good becomes a tool of division in Satan hands.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:29

Years ago, a large statue of Christ was erected high in the Andes on the border between Argentina and Chile. Called "Christ of the Andes," the statue symbolizes a pledge between the two countries that as long as the statue stands, there will be peace between Chile and Argentina. Shortly after the statue was erected, the Chileans began to protest that they had been slighted -- the statue had its back turned to Chile.
 How quickly our pride and hurt feelings can ruin a good thing.
 So just when tempers were at their highest in Chile,
 a Chilean newspaperman saved the day when he wrote an editorial that cleared the air and made the Chileans laugh by saying.
 "The people of Argentina need more watching over than the Chileans."
Bits & Pieces, June 25, 1992.

Are we willing to allow the Holy "Spirit to use our disappointments
 For his divine appointments?
 To use our bruised ego for advancement in Gods kingdom?

Paul wanted to go to Asia,
 But God said no.

⁶Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

So they move to Phrygia and Galatia

Paul tries to enter in to Bithynia,

⁷When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. Acts 16:7

Sometime it is God himself that stops us,

That doesn't answer our prayer

Puts us on hold.

Because he has a better plan for our life.

Someone has said: Your good can become the enemy of what is best.

Paul was probably a little confused by all these change of plans.

But he trusted God's leadership.

That is the question for us today?

Can you trust your life to the leading of the Holy Spirit?

Would you be willing to change directions if he asked?

Or to make a decision if he moved in your life?

Well we close this session today

By seeing how God used a disagreement,

To spread the Gospel as far as Macedonia and North Africa

At the same time.

Barnabas and Mark moved into North Africa

While Paul and Silas moved into Macedonia.

And because of it a woman named Lydia

Becomes a Christian as the Lord opened her heart .

¹⁴One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. Acts 16: 14

And she is used by God to provide a place of refuge for Paul on

His many Missionary journeys to come.

So the question we need to ask our selves today,

Am I a hindrance or a help to the ministry of the church.

Just because we have had some disagreements,

I didn't get my way,

Have I become a stumbling block,

Or a building block.

Would God be proud or sad at my attitude.

Let's seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. Matthew 6:33

And put aside our own desires and wants.