

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

10. Christ's Use Of Paul To Bring Great Leadership Blessing Out Of Great Tribulation (Acts 15:41-16:5)

I. Introduction

- A. The Apostle Paul noted that the cause for effectiveness in spiritual leadership is spiritual suffering, stating the principle that "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him," 2 Timothy 2:12a.
- B. A great example of that principle at work is provided for us in the extensive context of Acts 15:41-16:5:

II. Christ's Use Of Paul To Bring Great Leadership Blessing Out Of Great Tribulation, Acts 15:41-16:5.

- A. In the immediate context, Paul led Timothy to experience circumcision as an adult, a painful trial to one's health as an adult, that Timothy might have an effective outreach to unsaved Jewish people, Acts 16:1-5:
 - 1. At the city of Lystra, Paul found a disciple named "Timotheus" (KJV), or "Timothy" (NIV, ESV) as we generally call him, whose mother was a Jewess and his father a Greek, Acts 16:1.
 - 2. Since Timothy was highly recommended for his walk and Christian service by believers at both Lystra and Iconium about 20 miles away (*Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., map 13, "The Missionary Journeys of Paul"*), Paul wanted to take Timothy with him as a coworker, Acts 16:2-3a.
 - 3. However, Timothy's influence with unsaved Jews would have been seriously hurt since everyone knew he was uncircumcised, and his having a Jewish mother and a Greek father though he had not been circumcised would have been offensive to the Jews, cf. *Bible Knowledge Com., N. T., p. 398.*
 - 4. Accordingly, regardless if Timothy did not need to be circumcised to be saved, a fact established at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29), for the sake of love in reaching *unsaved* Jews by not being an offense, Paul had Timothy circumcised, Acts 16:3b,c.
 - 5. Thus, Paul and his team were able to edify the churches established on his first missionary journey, delivering the edifying edict of the Jerusalem Council and strengthening the churches, Acts 16:4-5.
- B. However, in the much broader context, Christ used the extensive sufferings of the Apostle Paul along with those of Timothy for enormous effectiveness in the Church down through history (as follows):
 - 1. Timothy's home, that of Lystra (since it was the town near Iconium where other believers knew and respected him, cf. Acts 16:2) was where Paul had been stoned and left for dead on his first missionary journey due to opposition to his Gospel ministry, cf. Acts 14:1, 19-20.
 - 2. Thus, for Paul to be willing to return to the location of this traumatic event and continue to minister there would have taken much faith in God and resiliency in the face of further possible threats, but doing so led to his meeting and conscripting Timothy to be his helper!
 - 3. Later, Paul's words to Timothy in his epistle of 2 Timothy 3:10-11 recalled these sufferings at Lystra, sufferings Timothy well knew, and that to encourage Timothy to remain steadfast in his faith and ministry in view of suffering tribulation as a leader, 2 Tim. 3:10-4:5.
 - 4. Indeed, that section of Scripture, 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8, has been often used not only for Timothy, but for Christian leaders of the Universal Church down through history: Paul's 2 Timothy 4:2a directive that Timothy "preach the Word" is the phrase that appears on the seal of the seminary from which I graduated, one that has been a leading institution in conservative Christianity!

Lesson: *In both the lives and ministries of Timothy and of the Apostle Paul, the SUFFERING each man faced for the SAKE of the MINISTRY of CHRIST first in the SHORT-TERM and then in the LONG-TERM perspectives has GREATLY IMPACTED their INFLUENCE on believers for the Lord!*

Application: *(1) If we face trials for our service for the Lord, be assured that the principle in 2 Timothy 2:12a rings true -- that Christ will use it to extend our leadership influence for His glory! (2) May we be willing, then, to suffer hardship in ministry as did Timothy to keep ourselves useful to God before the weak, and (3) may we STAY COMMITTED to difficult ministry assignments like Paul was in relation to his incredibly difficult ministry history at Lystra!*