

“Missing God’s Will!”

1. **Intro:**

- 1.1. **Q:** Did you ever have the experience of **sensing** that the Lord was **leading you** to do something really significant, even to the point of **telling others** about your decision, & **then** finding out **you were wrong**?
 - 1.1.1. Really the question isn’t whether such a thing ever happened to you, but rather, **how many times**?
 - 1.1.2. **How do we handle that? What do we do? What do we say?**
- 1.2. **Last week:** In Essentials, **Unity**; in Non-Essentials, **Liberty**; in All Things, **Charity!**
 - 1.2.1. As I read it, think through which category this fits into.
- 1.3. **Illustration** - In **older watches** there was always a **balance wheel**, a delicate part that provides compensation – for **heat & for cold**, in **upright & horizontal** positions – so that the action of the watch may remain constant under all circumstances.
 - 1.3.1. Such a perfect balance as this is, is **missing from human nature** on account of **sin**. In every life some bias may be detected; no one is ever wholly right, impartial, balanced.
 - 1.3.2. We see this truth illustrated all through the bible, for Scripture never glorifies **man**, only **God!**

2. **TORN RELATIONSHIPS! (15:36-41)**

- 2.1. **PAUL’S PLANS!** (36)
- 2.2. **WHEN THINGS BECOME A NON-NEGOTIABLE!** (37-41)
 - 2.2.1. These were not “Essentials” but “non-essentials” differences.
 - 2.2.2. **Key:** They were not doctrinal but personal on how best to do ministry!
- 2.3. Another example of “*blood being thicker than water*”!
 - 2.3.1. Oh and the 2 apostles never work together again; **YET** w/no animosity as Barnabas is mentioned in Paul’s epistles (Cor., Gal., col.)
- 2.4. The body of Christ is characterized by both **unity & diversity**.
 - 2.4.1. Really, as long as **spiritual unity** continues to be maintained, the more **organizational diversity** we have, the more unbelievers we are likely to reach for Christ.¹ 😊
- 2.5. If the 1st missionary agency ever known, headed by such renowned apostolic leadership as Paul & Barnabas, **suffered a mission split**, we who suffer splits today join a rather distinguished company. (Peter Wagner)

¹ Peter Wagner; Acts of the H.S.; pg.370.

- 2.6. F.F. Bruce sums up this situation, “The present disagreement was **overruled for good**: instead of one missionary & pastoral expedition, there were two.”
- 2.6.1. I can’t think of any of our personal missionaries who haven’t run into this very problem at least once in their ministry.
- 2.7. Do you think these splits **help** or **hurt** the church’s missionary effort? (both)
- 2.7.1. Can sometimes **stumble** others.
- 2.7.2. Can be worked together for **good**: It led to calling **Silas** forth; finding **Timothy**; revealing to **Mark** his weakness & bringing a change about in him.
- 2.8. **Good news**: Later Paul writes to the Colossian church & says, **Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)** Col.4:10
- 2.8.1. And in 2nd Timothy Paul asks Timothy to **bring Mark with him**.
- 2.9. **PAUL REBUILDS HIS MISSION TEAM!** (40,41)
- 2.10. **Hello Silas!** – They head north from Antioch by foot, & visited the churches of Syria & Cilicia along the way.
- 2.11. Why would **Silas** be a better partner for Paul at this stage of his career, than **Barnabas**? One commentator said, “because **Silas** didn’t have a cousin **Mark** whom he insisted on bringing along!” ☺
- 2.12. (41) **Strengthening the churches**...but not making a career of nurturing them.
- 2.12.1. Others(locals) would do that. This enabled him to move out to the frontiers as quickly as possible.
- 2.12.2. Thus Paul acted more like a spiritual **obstetrician**(pregnancy doctor) rather than a spiritual **pediatrician**(Children’s doctor).
- 2.12.2.1. He’d birth the church & move on, placing a **pediatric pastor** over its care!

3. **TAKING TIMOTHY! (16:1-5)**

- 3.1. **TAKING TIMOTHY!** (1,2)
- 3.2. Possible Paul led Tim to faith on 1st trip through. (many times refers to him as “my son”)
- 3.3. It seems like God always has the **right person** ready at the right time, **so be patient!**
- 3.4. Timothy is the only one in the NT to whom is given the *old prophetic title* “**Man of God!**” (1 Tim.6:11)
- 3.5. **CIRCUMCISING TIMOTHY!** (3-5)
- 3.6. **Why?** - Not because it would have been necessary for his salvation(saved 2 yrs)
- 3.6.1. Reason was not **theological** but **missiological**.
- 3.6.2. Paul would **flex** in whatever way was necessary to avoid offending the Jews.

- 3.7. Yes to circumcision in **Timothy's** case...but not **Titus** (Gal.2:3-5) **Why?**
- 3.7.1. **Timothy** – ½ Jew; circumcised to reach Jews for Christ.
- 3.7.2. **Titus** – Gentile; wasn't circumcised because those insisting on the rite for non-Jews were **believers** who should have known better.
- 3.7.2.1. **Become all things** to all men to win some; **but never to appease** legalistic believers!

4. **MISSING GOD'S WILL/VOICE/DIRECTION! (16:6-10)**

- 4.1. **STRIKE #1 & STRIKE #2** (6,7)
- 4.2. I love that Luke isn't inhibited about telling us this story just like it is!
- 4.2.1. I like how great heroes of the faith in the 1st century were capable of **blowing it** from time to time, as **we are today**. 😊
- 4.2.2. If Paul was perfect we couldn't identify with him.
- 4.2.3. But considering all his **shortfalls**, he was a **faithful & productive servant of God**, **so**, there is no reason I can't be.
- 4.2.4. Paul went through one of those experiences of **missing** what God was trying to say to him...not just **once**, but **twice!!**
- 4.3. **Story** - A bishop of a century ago pronounced from his pulpit and in the periodical he edited that **heavier-than-air flight** was both **impossible** and **contrary to the will of God**. Oh, the irony that **Bishop Wright** had two sons, **Orville** and **Wilbur!** [Wright was wrong. Sure of himself...but wrong!]
- 4.4. I am an advocate of **hearing** from God & **acting** on what we hear, but I also recognize that this procedure is misused, & can become **presumption** rather than **providence!**
- 4.4.1. It is always better to say, "**we sense** that this is the direction God wants us to go." Then if we **miss it**, we simply have to **humble ourselves & admit** that we happened to sense God's leading inaccurately.
- 4.4.2. I think the key is that **he heard he wasn't going the right way!**
- 4.4.2.1. Let's give him credit for that! (How many times we keep on going rt toward the proverbial cliff)
- 4.5. Understand, sometimes our well-laid human plans are sometimes **changed by the Holy Spirit** & other times they can be equally **obstructed by the devil**.
- 4.5.1. 1 Thes.2:18 **Therefore we wanted to come to you - even I, Paul, time and again - but Satan hindered us.**
- 4.5.2. Only by intimacy with the Father in **prayer** & maintaining the **fullness of the Holy Spirit** in our daily lives will we be able accurately to **discern** whether we should **turn around & go back** because **God** wants us to, **or** whether we should **courageously push on ahead** because the obstacle has been placed in our way by **the enemy**.²

² Ibid; pg.387.

- 4.6. He took steps, God closed doors, he waited; & then God showed him the way!³
- 4.7. **To know** the will of God is the greatest **knowledge!**
To do the will of God is the greatest **achievement!**⁴
- 4.8. The **will** of God never will lead you where the **grace** of God cannot keep you!
- 4.9. Hey wait a minute, doesn't God care about Asia & Bithynia? I thought He *so loved the world?* See 1 Pet.1:2
- 4.10. **OUT OF THE PARK!** (8-10)
- 4.11. Ok, after strike 1 & strike 2, he not only knocks it out of the park but out of the continent. (Asia to Europe)
- 4.12. (8) **Troas** – when all else fails, go **rent a condo** at the beach & **pray!**
- 4.13. To Europe with Power! – The beginning of missionary work on another continent.
- 4.13.1. **Alexander of Macedon** who, 400 years before, had dreamed of 1 empire & 1 language, had “*built better than he knew*”, for the dispersion of the **Greek language** had made the spread of the gospel possible.
- 4.14. Some would say, “Paul, what about the continuing need of Asia, what about the heathens at home? Why go across the seas?” (sound familiar?)
- 4.14.1. Is **imperfection** here, reason for **complete ignorance** there?
- 4.14.2. Wasn't Christ's plan in Acts 1:8 to go to **the ends** of the earth, or not?
- 4.15. **End Story** - As the golfer approached the first tee, a hazardous hole with a green surrounded by water, he debated if he should use his new golf ball. Deciding that the hole was too treacherous, he pulled out an old ball and placed it on the tee. Just then he heard a voice from above say loudly: “**USE THE NEW BALL!**” Frightened, he replaced the old ball with the new one and approached the tee. Now the voice from above shouted: “**TAKE A PRACTICE SWING!**” With this, the golfer stepped backward and took a swing. Feeling more confident, he approached the tee when the voice again rang out: “**USE THE OLD BALL!**”

³ Warren Wiersbe; With The word; pg.718.

⁴ George W. Truett, quoted in “Toolkit,” Cell Church, Winter, 1996, p. 10.