



Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – October 15, 2020

The Lord be with you...

They say that life is what happens while you're making your plans. Well, I wonder, have you been thinking or saying something like that over the past several months, I mean with the coronavirus and the lockdowns, and just everything that's been happening, that life is what happens while you're making your plans. Well, I remember late in February, sitting down with my calendar and just having to cross out a lot of plans, a lot of good plans, and we seem to prove the poet right that the best plans of mice and men often go array. Remember some of the plans that you've made for your business, for your church, your family, or schooling, your ministry. That vacation that you were gonna go on. Well, if you're anything like me. Plans that don't work out well, it can disappoint. Discourage. Maybe, leaving us a little angry at God. Well, I wonder, I just... God have anything to say about our plans that don't work out... Let's take a look. Today, I'm looking at Acts Chapter 16, in which the apostle Paul is on his second missionary journey, where we see that like most of us setting out on a journey, Paul has a plan, and it's a really good plan, and Paul has put together a first rate team, he's got Silas and Timothy, great man of God. And Paul, he is smart his experience, Paul knows what he's doing, and he has this wonderful plan to spread the good news of Jesus Christ, to do great things for God.

So I pick up reading in Acts Chapter 16, verse 7 "they [that is Paul, Silas Timothy,] they went through the region of Phreesia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia." So Paul had this plan, and it is to take the good news of Jesus Christ to Asia, to the Roman province of Asia minor, that is the west southwest coast of what is modern day Turkey.

As Paul has his eye on the great metropolis of Ephesus, as it is one of the great cities of the ancient world, as Paul sees Ephesus as a strategic hub for reaching the world with the good news of Jesus. And so Paul targets Ephesus. But our text says that Paul is forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. In modern English we would say, The Holy Spirit shuts the door. Please note that it does not say that an evil spirit shuts the door. Hey, it might feel like that sometimes, but it's not. It's the Holy Spirit who says no to Paul's plan. And so Paul reverses the direction, instead of going south and east into Asia Minor, they go along the Northwest coast and then north east into Phreesia and Galatia. That might ring a bell for you as churches in Galatia are formed to whom Paul will later write his letter to the Galatians, so a door closes and a lot of good happens. Let's read on in verse 7. "When they had come opposite Misia, they attempted to go into Bethania, but the spirit of Jesus did not allow them." Did you see that? Verse 6, The Holy Spirit, forbids. Verse 7 the Spirit of Jesus did not allow. So that's a Trinity at work here. As the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus are one forbidding, not allowing, not permitting things to go according to plan. So let's just say that God has another plan. God closes a door. To open a door. Verse 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." This is the midnight call, Come over to Macedonia and help us. Macedonia, well that's Europe, that's northern Greece. Come over and help us. And Paul answers the call, and it means it



water from rock

means the planting of the first churches in Europe, it means to spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ to Europe, to Philippi, Thessalonica, to Corinth, and on and on.

You see, Paul hadn't planned to go there, it was not even on Paul's radar. Paul had his plan. God had a bigger plan. You know the rest of the story is that Paul does get to Ephesus, he does get to Asia Minor, and he has an incredibly fruitful ministry there, but now is not the time. And this really excites me as I read as many times in my life, in my ministry, God closes doors. Sometimes it hurts, it frustrates, but I've lived enough years to see that God has something better, and I tell people the reason why I have a big nose is because I've slammed into quite a few closed doors, and I have seen God open better doors.

So think back over your life. Yeah. Some doors have been closed. You didn't get the job you wanted... You didn't get into the school you wanted. You didn't get the promotion. Doors close. Doors open. According to God's perfect timing. I'm really held by something Solomon says in Proverbs chapter 16 verse 9 "A man plans his way but the Lord directs his steps." Life is what happens while we make plans, thank God for that. Hear the word of the Lord in Jeremiah 29 verse 11 "For surely I know the plans I have for you says the Lord plans for your welfare and not for harm Plans to give you a future with hope."

I am Tim Smith a fellow traveler thanks for listening until next time.



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