

Theme: As You Are Going: The Church on Mission

Message: The Macedonian Call (& Ours)

Aim: Realize God's call on each of our lives to make disciples.

Intro: Last week, Pastor Derek referenced that great text in Ephesians 2:8-10, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”* As he pointed out, we are not saved by works but we are saved to work. We should ask, what are the works God has prepared for us to do? And shouldn't we be doing them by the power & leading of the Holy Spirit? I ask you to think about that for your personal life & the life of our church. We could discuss the possibilities & make a list of the works that God has prepared for us to do, but at the top of that list, for each of us, is to be His witness; to make disciples. I know that some of you will say, “I'm not an evangelist” & maybe you don't have that particular spiritual gift; but each of us is called to be a witness for Christ & to pray for the lost & to pray for & take opportunities to witness for Christ. Theme: As you are going: the church on mission. Most of us are not called to be an Apostle Paul but we can learn from his example what it means & how to be on mission w/God. Acts 16 gives us some important thoughts about being on mission & doing the works which God has prepared for us to do. Before we read our text for today, Acts 16:6-34, let's back up to connect the dots. After the Jerusalem Council, where the apostles & elders & others in Jerusalem met to discuss & decide on the question of whether or not Gentile believers needed to be circumcised & keep the traditions of the Jews – essentially become Jewish proselytes – in order to be saved, Paul & Barnabas & some select others returned to Antioch in order to report the agreed upon answer – no! You are not saved by these “works” observed by Jews but only by the grace of God thru faith in Christ; but be careful not to offend your Jewish brothers/sisters in Christ by practices from your Gentile past, before Christ. Having given that report, gladly received by believers in Antioch, Paul wanted he & Barnabas to return to the areas/churches where they went on that 1st missionary journey, to share this report & to

check on their spiritual welfare. Barnabas, ever the encourager & discipler, wanted to take John Mark w/them. Paul didn't agree. Mark had left them before & wasn't part of their ministry in Derbe, Lystra & Iconium, where they were headed. Luke records that "there arose a sharp disagreement" between Paul & Barnabas, & they decided to go separate ways. **Isn't it interesting that disagreements can happen in the Church but it doesn't have to impede the mission. And what someone else decides to do doesn't have to deter you/I from the work God has prepared for us.** Barnabas took his young cousin Mark w/him back home to Cyprus & I'm sure was used by God to impact Mark's life & perhaps even help him in his pursuit of the Jesus story. Mark would go on to write the 1st gospel (Mark), w/Peter being a major resource. God had a work prepared for Mark (& Barnabas). There was another disciple in Antioch name Silas, whom Paul chose to go w/him on his 2nd journey. God had a work for Paul & Silas & Timothy, whom we meet in the beginning of Acts 16. **God has a work for you & me as well!** Paul & Silas went the land route thru Syria & Cilicia (map), where Paul's hometown of Tarsus was. As they went, they strengthened the churches along the way. Then they went on to Derbe & Lystra, where they had been before, in order to see how the churches were doing. It's not known exactly how much time had elapsed between Paul's 1st & his 2nd missionary journey, but it is thought to have been at least a year, during which time he wrote the Epistle to those Galatian churches he was revisiting & participated in the Jerusalem Council. The church in Lystra seemed to be doing well, as evidenced in the emergence of a young disciple named Timothy, whose mother was a Jewish believer but his father was an unbelieving Greek/Gentile. Paul wanted to take this promising young man w/him, to mentor him & engage him in the work. Because he would be reaching out to Jews wherever he went, he had Timothy, this Jewish-Gentile, circumcised, in order not to put a stumbling block before them. Having encouraged those churches they had established before, Paul & Silas decided to go forward. Acts 16:6-34 [READ]. This marks another milestone in the life of the 1st century Church. The gospel would go further than ever before up to this time. W/a little reading between the lines (Luke doesn't specifically say it) we

can note I) **Paul & Silas were seeking God & looking for opportunities.** It would make sense that they should go into Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) because that's where the all-important city of Ephesus was, & the whole region was an influential area where Paul surely thought the gospel would flourish. But for some reason God the Holy Spirit said no. The gospel would go to that area, but it evidently wasn't the right time, which only God would know. We don't know how Paul recognized that the Spirit was forbidding them, whether it was some literal obstacle in their way or simply he & Silas sensing it in their spirits, but they understood they were not to go into Asia. It wasn't wrong for them to want to go there & preach the gospel, just not the right time. They would get there eventually, by God's leading. Then also, "the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them" to go into Bithynia, to the north. But that didn't stop them. They kept seeking God & looking for opportunities. They skirted Asia & made their way to Troas, a seaport. It was there that Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia (to the northwest) & the man said in the vision, "Come over to Macedonia to help us." "Oh, this is what God wants." Now they had their direction; God was calling them to "preach the gospel" to those in Macedonia. You & I may not be called to be Apostle Paul, but we can seek God's leading & look for opportunities around us as we are going about our lives. It may be that God will close some doors for a time but the right opportunities come from Him, who has prepared works for us to do. II) **Paul & Silas were worshipping & looking for opportunities.** They made their way to Philippi, which Luke said was "a leading city of Macedonia & a Roman colony." Now, they didn't set up a tent & start preaching. It seems they were there for several days just scoping it out. But on the Sabbath, they searched for a place of prayer. Evidently, there was no Jewish synagogue in Philippi, for they would have certainly gone there. David Gudzik points out that this indicates that there were not many Jewish men in Philippi. 10 Jewish men would have been enough to have a synagogue. But elsewhere in Scripture we read of Jewish men & women meeting by a river to pray & worship God. Paul & Silas sought out that gathering. They wanted to worship on the Sabbath. As newbies there in Philippi, they would have been given the opportunity to

read Scripture (which they may not have had) or otherwise share. Of course, they shared the gospel. Among those gathered there was a woman named Lydia, described as being from Thyatira (near Ephesus) & a seller of purple. Purple cloth was sold to those of higher class, so Lydia was most likely upper crust. Luke said, “The Lord opened her heart” & she believed & was baptized. She was the 1st convert in Macedonia. Note that those of her household (family & staff) were baptized as well, meaning they also believed. Paul & Silas & Timothy were invited to stay at her house while they were in Philippi. ***When you reach someone w/the gospel, you may be reaching into their family as well, though you may not see it right away.** But how important worship is for us! Day by day, week by week, the practice of worshipping God aligns us w/Him & His mission. I don’t think you can truly worship God consistently & not be a witness for Him. If we worship Him & look for opportunities, He will be faithful. III) **Paul & Silas looked for opportunities even in difficult situations.** As they went week by week or even day by day to the place of prayer, on their way they encountered a slave girl w/a demon spirit of divination, telling fortunes & such. Made her owners much money. She followed Paul & his companions & kept yelling out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” She was telling the truth, so why did Paul become annoyed? Gudzik points out that he didn’t want demonic advertisement/ recommendation. “He didn’t need demonic approval of his work.” So, Paul, after a while, commanded the demon spirit to come out of the girl, & it did. Luke didn’t say, but it may have been that this slave girl became the next convert in Philippi. Her owners were upset because now she couldn’t make money for them. They seized Paul & Silas & dragged them before the magistrates, in the marketplace, accusing them of advocating unlawful customs (untrue). The magistrates had them beaten & put in jail. The jailer, unnamed, put them in the inner prison w/their feet in stocks. They weren’t going anywhere! You know the story. Paul & Silas didn’t give up. “Well, we tried & look where it got us. So much for trying.” No, even w/their wounds from the beating they took, Paul & Silas prayed & sang hymns - worshipped! And I don’t think their prayers were , “Oh God, why have

you let this happen?” I wonder if they may have been praying for the new believers in Philippi, & their fellow prisoners, & even for the jailer, & perhaps for God to deliver them so they could continue their work. Anyway, a great earthquake occurred & the foundations of the prison were shaken & the doors opened. The jailer awoke, thought that all the prisoners had surely escaped, & was about to commit suicide when Paul said, “Don’t harm yourself; we’re all here.” The jailer, knowing some of who Paul & Silas were, fell down on his knees, trembling & asked, “What must I do to be saved?” Their answer is a simple but important truth: “**Believe in the Lord Jesus, & you will be saved, & your household.**” Again, you don’t know how great the results will be when you reach one for Christ. That night the Philippian jailer & all his family were baptized, professing faith in Christ. Hallelujah! What if Paul & Silas had simply given up, thrown in the towel? Rather, they took the opportunity God placed before them & a whole family was reached. The jailer was not the upper crust that Lydia was, nor was he the very lower class as the slave girl. He was somewhere in the middle. God is not a respecter of person. Whosoever will to the Lord may come! As we are going, let us seek God & opportunities; let us be worshippers, aligning w/God & seeking opportunities; let us not give up when the going gets rough, but keep praying & worshipping & seeking God & opportunities. As we are going, let us be a church on mission – God’s mission. Let us do the work God has prepared for us to do.