

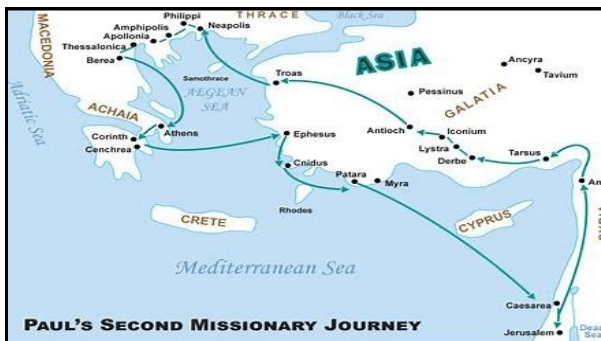
The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
Jim Hoffman

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48 AD	The Council at Jerusalem	Acts 15
49 AD	Paul's Second Missionary Journey	Acts 15:36
49 AD	Paul in Philippi	Acts 16
49 AD	Paul in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens	Acts 17
51 AD	Paul in Corinth	Acts 18
54 AD	Paul in Ephesus	Acts 19
57 AD	Paul in Macedonia and Greece	Acts 20
59 AD	Paul Returns to Jerusalem	Acts 21 - 23
60 AD	Paul imprisoned in Caesarea	Acts 24
62 AD	Paul Before Festus	Acts 25
62 AD	Paul Before Agrippa	Acts 26
62 AD	Paul Sails for Rome	Acts 27
62 AD	The Shipwreck	Acts 27:13
62 AD	Paul Ashore at Malta	Acts 28
62 AD	Paul Preaches at Rome	Acts 28:11

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 15:22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. **They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas**, leading men among the brothers, 23 with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. 24 Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, 25 it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: 29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Let's meet Silas** – he was a Hellenistic Jew meaning that he was not from Judea but descended from the Israelites who had been scattered among the gentiles.
- Hellenistic Jews spoke Greek and were far more culturally Greek than they were Jews.
- Silas was also a Roman citizen (helpful to missionaries of his day) and sometimes went by Silvanus.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Silas penned 1st Peter as Peter dictated – 1st Peter 5:12 **By Silvanus**, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.
- 1st Thes 1:1 Paul, **Silvanus**, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.
- He was faithful believer and highly trusted by both Paul and Peter.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Let's meet Barsabbas – Acts 1:23 And they put forward two, **Joseph called Barsabbas**, who was also called Justus, and Matthias.
- Acts 15:22b "They sent Judas called **Barsabbas**, and **Silas**, leading men among the brothers."
- Please note that just because he wasn't chosen as Judas' replacement does not mean he wasn't a leader.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 15:30 So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. 31 And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. 32 And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. 33 And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them. 35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. 36 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." 37 Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. 39 **And there arose a sharp disagreement**, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 15:36 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." NLT
- Just as Paul retraced his steps on his 1st missionary journey he now plans to go back over the same ground.
- Again we see the need to follow-up converts and help them to grow so that they are healthy Christians and not professors who others may some day scratch their heads over. 😊

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **"And there arose a sharp disagreement"** -
- Perhaps Paul or Barnabas had this right – either John Mark was part of God's will at this time or he wasn't.
- Or maybe God orchestrated the disagreement so as to double their missionary capacity.
- For sure, it is good for the church of all ages to know that not all of us know God's will all the time. 😊

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The Acts of the Apostles

In the church, it is okay to have disagreements, but it is not okay to be disagreeable. 😊

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The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 16:1 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. 3 **Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.** 4 As they went on their way through the cities, **they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.** 5 **So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.** NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **“Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”**
- It is believed that Timothy was saved on Paul’s 1st missionary journey through Derbe and Lystra.
- Later on, Paul will send him as his personal emissary and two of our New Testament books are letters written by Paul to Timothy.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Okay, if this whole big blow-up over circumcision was settled in Acts 15 why is that Paul has Timothy circumcised?
- Because it would just make ministry easier for Timothy and give him unhindered access to the synagogues.
- As spiritual as we may want to be, at times the most spiritual thing is to just be pragmatic.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Okay, next question – if Paul is the Apostle to the gentiles why did he care about easier access to the synagogues?
- Because it seems he was honoring Romans 1:16 **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”** ESV
- And, as we’ve seen before – where else are you going to find people who are already interested in spiritual things?

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **“they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily”**
- It is interesting to me that as Paul and Silas traveled out from their home territory one of the things they were delivering was the decision from the council in Jerusalem. (seems boring to us, but not to them!)

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 16:6 Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the **Holy Spirit** had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. 7 Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but again the **Spirit of Jesus** did not allow them to go there. 8 So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas. 9 That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” 10 So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there. NLT

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How God Leads

The Scriptures

Counsel of Others

Circumstances (Open and Closed Doors)

Rev 3:8 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut.

Visions / Dreams

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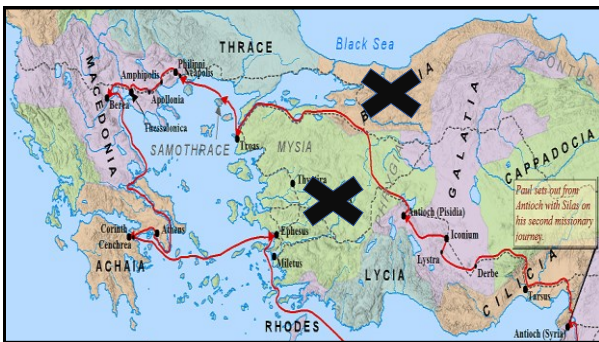
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The Acts of the Apostles

- "Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, **because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time.**"
- "Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, **but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there.**"
- These scriptures demonstrate but one of the ways God leads – through "open" and "closed" doors.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- So why does Luke not tell us what it was the Holy Spirit did to prevent them from going to Asia and Bithynia?
- Here is a guess – throughout our lives the Spirit of God will direct us in many different ways and he doesn't want us focusing on just one of the ways he led Paul.
- **Another way to express this kind of leading is to say that God sometimes leads us through circumstances.**

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **“That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” 10 So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there”**
- So whatever it was the Holy Spirit did to prevent them from going to Asia and Bithynia is now coupled with a vision to advance the gospel to Europe for the first time.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- It's not that it will always be wrong to preach the gospel in Asia or Bithynia, it just wasn't God's will at the time.
- Could this explain the difference we see in the lives of the Christians we know – some seem to be much more productive and effective than others.
- Is it possible what we see is the difference between doing good works **somewhere** and doing works **exactly where** God wants us to be?

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 16:11 We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. 12 From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days. 13 **On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer**, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. 14 One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. **As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying.** 15 She and her household were baptized, and she asked us to be her guests. "If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my home." And she urged us until we agreed. NLT

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The Acts of the Apostles

- **"On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer"**
- Paul and company went outside the city to the riverbank because if there was a ready-made Jewish audience, that is where they would be without a synagogue.
- They could do ceremonial cleansing at the river.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- In God's providence there was a businesswoman there from Thyatira who was a seller of a very expensive purple cloth.
- To be roughly 300 miles from home with associates with her she must have been quite successful.
- Since there is no mention of a husband it is assumed she was widowed or divorced.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Lydia is also described as “one who worshiped God”.
- She is a gentile praying by the river on the Sabbath day and worshiping God – this makes her the female version of Cornelius.
- She was a “God-fearer” following many of the Jewish customs and worshiping Jehovah so we can see evidence of her interest in spiritual things; **maybe even an O.T. believer.**

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The Acts of the Apostles

- And then we read this, **“As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying”.**
- After years of contemplation and many hours of study I can tell you with 100% certainty I do not know why it is that God opens some hearts and not others.
- But I do know “how” he opens hearts and actually we’ve been seeing it for months!

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 2:37 **Peter’s words pierced their hearts**, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”
- Acts 2:41 **Those who believed what Peter said** were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.
- Acts 4:4 But **many of the people who heard their message believed it**, so the number of men who believed now totaled about 5,000.

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 8:12 But **now the people believed Philip's message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.**
- Acts 13:12 When the governor saw what had happened, **he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.**
- Acts 13:48 **When the Gentiles heard this**, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life **became believers.**

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 15:7 Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago **to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe.**
- Acts 17:32 **When they heard Paul speak about the resurrection of the dead**, some laughed in contempt, but others said, "We want to hear more about this later." 33 That ended Paul's discussion with them, 34 but **some joined him and became believers.**

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The Acts of the Apostles

- I realize this still leaves us with the mystery of "why aren't all hearts opened by the word?"
 - Is it all on God – he had to choose us?
 - Is it all on us – we had to choose him?
 - Or – are both true?

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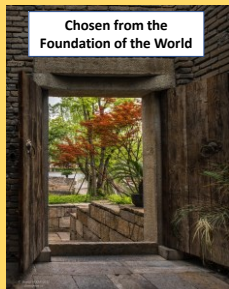
The Acts of the Apostles

- I urge you to resist dismissing the question of “why does God not open all hearts as he did Lydia’s?” without first wrestling with the complexities in the question.
- We’ve all seen it – two people raised in the same house with the same inputs, same experiences, same everything.
- One hears and believes the gospel, the other hears the gospel and has no interest.

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The Acts of the Apostles



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Questions

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