

Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

September 1, 2013

34. The Blessings of Disagreement in Disguise

Acts 15:36-16:5

It is imperative to be aware of doctrines that are contrary to the Scriptures which are being taught by certain people as prerequisites for salvation. But the truth is: Salvation is through grace by faith in the completed work of Jesus Christ on Calvary. Very often you will encounter individuals who would attempt to teach believers that certain things have to be done in a particular way according to their own culture and/or customs before one is accepted as a fellow believer. It is the work of the Church to stand firmly against such introductions of culture or customs that are contrary to the fundamental basic doctrine of the Christian faith as part of the prerequisite for salvation and/or becoming part of the Church and the household of God. This was the stance of Paul and Barnabas when certain people came from Judea to the church in Antioch and began to teach that circumcision was a prerequisite for salvation. This led to the Jerusalem council meeting where the Apostles reached the following conclusion in the letter sent to the Gentile believers: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things" (Acts 15:28-29).

The Jerusalem Church council then sent Paul and Barnabas along with Judas and Silas who were prophets to confirm by word of mouth what had been written to the Gentile churches. Judas and Silas also encouraged the brethren with much exhortation and then returned to Jerusalem. But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord. As the Church grew, there was need for Paul and Barnabas to visit the churches established during their first missionary journey. They had a strong disagreement on John Mark tagging along with them for this trip. This disagreement was a great blessing in disguise.

Thus our text for today reads, "Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." 37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. 41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. 16:1 Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek. 2 The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. 3 Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers" (Acts 15:36-16:5).

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude this sermon on today please allow me to summarize it as follows. The work and growth of the church involves:

- Being born again or accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and savior; and becoming part of the household of God as a believer.
- Every believer allowing the Holy Spirit to do the work of the church through them.
- Challenging and opposing any introduction of customs or cultural practice contrary to Biblical doctrine as a prerequisite for salvation rather than solely depending on provisions in the Bible.
- Believers will sometimes disagree sharply on methods of doing things but we must let the Holy Spirit to be in control for our disagreements to turn out to be blessings in disguise to further expand the kingdom of God..
- Basic doctrines of the truth are taught in the churches so that they can be strengthened in the faith and grow daily in numbers.
- This is what the work and growth of the church is all about. And let the church say, "Amen!"

To become part of the household of God as a believer, and do the work of the church to cause healthy church growth, you must first know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior and then allow the Holy Spirit to empower you. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to do the work of the Church to cause its continual growth. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

September 8, 2013 35. Vision of the Man of Macedonia and Lydia's Conversion Acts 16:6-15

We are pilgrims here on earth and in our pilgrim's journey we must never forget that there are missions to accomplish and purposes to be fulfilled but we must keep our vision sharp to reach our destination. For without a vision, the people perish and without knowledge they are destroyed. Therefore, along the way we are to spread the good tidings of salvation and eternal life being obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit. As we remain faithful in obeying the Holy Spirit's leading, He will use our testimony and preaching to convince through conviction to bring about the conversion of souls. The word of God can never go out in vain but it will accomplish the purpose it has been sent forth for. The challenge for believers is to keep their vision sharp and to do the work of the church faithfully so that people can be converted through the power of the Holy Spirit thereby causing the growth of the Church.

The strong disagreement between Paul and Barnabas on John Mark tagging along with them for

the second missionary journey had led to the birth of two groups of missionary workers. This was indeed a great blessing in disguise. Barnabas went through Cyprus with John Mark whereas Paul and Silas went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. All these happened under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. And sometimes the Holy Spirit will prevent us from preaching in certain places at a particular time because that was not the priority at that time.

Thus our text for today reads, “Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the Province of Asia. 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. 8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. 9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” 10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. 11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. 12 From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. 13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. 14 One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. 15 When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us” (Acts 16:6-15).

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude this sermon on today please allow me to summarize it as follows. The work and growth of the church involves:

- Being born again or accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and savior; and becoming part of the household of God as a believer.
- Every believer allowing the Holy Spirit to do the work of the church through them.
- Keeping the vision God given you sharp.
- Believers working with the Holy Spirit to spread the word of God.
- Being hospitable to those spreading the word just as Lydia, a worshiper of God, did.
- This is what the work and growth of the church is all about. And let the church say, “Amen!”

To become part of the household of God as a believer, and do the work of the church to cause healthy church growth, you must first know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior and then allow the Holy Spirit to empower you. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God’s family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to do the work of the Church to cause its continual growth. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

September 15, 2013

36. Paul and Silas in Prison

Acts 16:16-40

I would like to begin today's sermon with a caution: "Be careful in receiving praises from people". Deceitful spirits are now speaking what you want to hear. Demons now speak the language of God and praise in deceit those who preach the word. In these later days of the Christian journey be careful that you are not fooled or deceived because evil spirits are causing men to deceive even as they are deceived. Be careful of those who can predict the future. Be careful of those female palm readers who now have signs everywhere and deceitfully calling themselves sisters that can predict your future by reading your palm. Christians, you must be careful and you must ask God for wisdom and the spirit of discernment to know what spirit is speaking even in the congregation of believers.

This is why it is imperative for you to prepare your heart, mind and soul before you start on your way to a worship place. Sometimes we do not listen to God because we are in a hurry to get to the house of worship that we truly forget what worship is. At times we hurry for a church occasion and forget that our service to God is to minister to others. At other times we allow our circumstances, conditions and situations to overwhelm us that we cannot truly worship. Only if we can truly worship God in spirit and in truth, then we would discover that during our worship and at our midnights, God will turn everything around for our good. It is not you that turn your life around for the better, but God that does it as you truly worship and serve Him. The question to ponder on every time is what do you hear each time you are going to worship? Is it a deceitful voice? Is it flattery or is it the truth? Listen carefully; God uses your circumstances, conditions or situations to minister to others to deliver them from evil and cause them to be saved so long as your worship remains true – in spirit and in truth. Even when men attempt to flatter you; or accuse you falsely or persecute you – God uses such occasions to minister to someone who truly needs salvation and/or deliverance from evil control. And when you are trapped in the prison of self-pity, how is your worship. Do you let go of self and let God take control?

Thus our text for today reads, "Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. 17 She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." 18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her. 19 When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. 20 They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar 21 by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice." 22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 When he received these

orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household. 35 When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." 36 The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace." 37 But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out." 38 The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. 39 They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. 40 After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left" (Acts 16:16-40).

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude this sermon on today please allow me to summarize it as follows. The work and growth of the church involves:

- Being born again or accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and savior; and becoming part of the household of God as a believer.
- Every believer allowing the Holy Spirit to do the work of the church through them.
- Individuals and their households become saved.
- Those saved to be hospitable to those spreading the word of God just as Lydia, a worshiper of God, and the Jailer did in Philippi.
- This is what the work and growth of the church is all about. And let the church say, "Amen!"

To become part of the household of God as a believer, and do the work of the church to cause healthy church growth, you must first know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior and then allow the Holy Spirit to empower you. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to do the work of the Church to cause its continual growth. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. R. D. Jacobs, Evangelist

THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

September 22, 2013

37. Preaching Christ in Thessalonica & Berea

Acts 17:1-15

We continue the sermon series “THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH” as we join 1 of 2 missionary teams that have made it their mission to return and re-strengthen and to see how the new Believers were doing. We also note this as Paul’s second missionary journey. (Acts 15:37) Their trip begins in Thessalonica, as they traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia. On his arrival as his custom was he entered into the Jewish Synagogue for three Sabbaths and preached that Christ had to suffer and arise from the dead and that Jesus was the Christ! (Acts 17:1-4) He shared the Truth, which one must believe that Jesus was the Messiah (The Anointed One) and that he died and arose again!

After preaching the Truth, many Greeks and women there Believed! Those who believed began to show Love, the mark of a Disciple of Christ, as seen in Jason who welcomed Paul into his house. This love is seen through Hospitality, which requires a Love for people, as was seen in Lydia (Acts 16:14-15) and the Roman Jailer (Acts 16: 25-34). Although the new believers showed the Character of Love the others who did not believe did not. The others became envious, gathered together bad characters and assaulted Jason’s house to bring Paul before the rulers of the city. (Acts 17:5-9) The Believers showed Love and that love spread peace to the city. But, the non Believers caused an uproar, started a mob, then a riot, and troubled the rulers and people of the city. This shows us the importance of the Work of the Church as we are to make disciples and thus spread Love and Peace.

For Paul’s safety, they moved him by night to the neighboring city of Berea. Once there he again went into the Synagogue and preached Jesus and found that those who believed there were of a more noble character as many honorable men and women in the city believed. With eagerness and readiness did they receive the Truth and daily searched the scriptures to prove their belief as truth. (Acts 17:10-12) Unlike Thessalonica, this city received the Word of Truth and this upset the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica as they traveled to Berea once they heard that Paul was there preaching Jesus Christ. (Acts 17: 13-14) The jealousy, envy, hatred, and pure evilness of unbelievers show the drastic difference between the attitudes and character of Christians. The Love of Christians issue from a Heart after God’s own heart and His mind. A Christian once saved receives the Holy Spirit of God that daily helps us to be confirmed to the image of Christ-who is Love. With the Love of Christ shown by Christians, homes, towns, cities, states, countries, and the World could see peace.

After the Jews of Thessalonica came and stirred up the city of Berea, it was decided to move Paul away again and this time he decided to move from the area. (Acts 17:15) At this time, because of the hostility of the Jews of Thessalonica, Paul decided to know the dust off of his sandals and

move on to others that may be more receptive to the Gospel. And there will be times while doing the work of the Church that many will try to hinder the Work of the Church to Grow the Kingdom of God. But, no one can stop the Work of God through Convicting Convincing and Converting unbelievers. Paul had to be assured that as long as there were some Christians in the area there would always be someone there showing and sharing the Love of Christ! And, as long as we Christians are in the Earth we ought to share the Love of Jesus that he loved us so that he died for our sins and arose from the grave so that we might have salvation through believing in Him!

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THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

September 29, 2013

38. Proclaiming Christ in Athens

Acts 17:16-34

Please I want to invite you to travel with me to your own city. How will you describe your city to me? Most probably it will not be far different from the city of Athens. Athens was a blustering city full of different activities including the worship of many gods. Paul was very observant when he got there. The city of Athens was full of idols, some worshippers of the true God and hosts of philosophers (especially Epicurean and Stoic philosophers).

Epicureanism is a system of philosophy based upon the teachings of Epicurus, founded around 307 BC. Epicurus was an atomic materialist, following in the steps of Democritus. His materialism led him to a general attack on superstition and divine intervention. Following Aristippus—about whom very little is known—Epicurus believed that what he called "pleasure" is the greatest good, but the way to attain such pleasure is to live modestly and to gain knowledge of the workings of the world and the limits of one's desires. This led one to attain a state of tranquility (ataraxia) and freedom from fear, as well as absence of bodily pain (aponia). The combination of these two states is supposed to constitute happiness in its highest form. Although Epicureanism is a form of hedonism, insofar as it declares pleasure to be the sole intrinsic good, its conception of absence of pain as the greatest pleasure and its advocacy of a simple life makes it different from "hedonism" (pleasure-seeking, self-indulgence, self-gratification) as it is commonly understood. Epicureanism was originally a challenge to Platonism, though later it became the main opponent of Stoicism. Epicurus and his followers shunned politics.

Stoicism is a school of Hellenistic philosophy founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium in the early 3rd century BC. The Stoics taught that destructive emotions resulted from errors in judgment, and that a sage, or person of "moral and intellectual perfection," would not suffer such emotions. Stoics were concerned with the active relationship between cosmic determinism and human freedom, and the belief that it is virtuous to maintain a will (called prohairesis) that is in accord

with nature. Because of this, the Stoics presented their philosophy as a way of life, and they thought that the best indication of an individual's philosophy was not what a person said but how he behaved. Later Stoics, such as Seneca and Epictetus, emphasized that because "virtue is sufficient for happiness", a sage was immune to misfortune. This belief is similar to the meaning of the phrase "stoic calm", though the phrase does not include the "radical ethical" Stoic views that only a sage can be considered truly free, and that all moral corruptions are equally vicious.

Just like Athens, our cities today, are full of idols, true worshippers of the True God and people of various philosophies. People meet at the barber shops and saloon talking and listening to new ideas of life, sports, weather and politics. The questions to respond to are what do you belong to and what are you doing to turn your city towards the living God? Paul perceived that the people of Athens did not know the true Living God and seized the opportunity of the state of that city to proclaim Jesus Christ as the way to salvation, peace and happiness.

Thus our text for today reads, “While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. 18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. 19 Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus (served as a high court of Appeal where the classical judicial body met), where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” 21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) 22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. 24 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man He made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 28 ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ 29 “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. 30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.” 32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” 33 At that, Paul left the Council. 34 Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others” (Acts 17:16-34).

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude this sermon on today please allow me to summarize it as follows. The work and growth of the church involves:

- Being born again or accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and savior; and becoming part of the household of God as a believer.
- Every believer allowing the Holy Spirit to do the work of the church through them.
- Believers being observant of what is taking place in their cities to use such as an opportunity to proclaim Jesus Christ as the way to salvation, peace and happiness.
- Evangelism as the way of winning people to Christ thereby building God's kingdom and causing church growth.
- This is what the work and growth of the church is all about. And let the church say, "Amen!"

To become part of the household of God as a believer, and be saved, have peace and happiness; and do the work of the church to cause healthy church growth, you must first know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior and then allow the Holy Spirit to empower you. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to do the work of the Church to cause its continual growth. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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