

In His Guiding Hands

Acts 16:5-12

Halifax: 2 December 2012

Introduction

Last week in our Sermon series from Acts, we began to trace Paul on his second missionary journey.

- We saw how the Lord graciously provided for the church and for the apostle a very faithful young man.
 - He was raised up from a backwater town, and he came from a mixed marriage with a Jewish mother who had disobediently married a Greek.
 - We saw how, right from the start, this young man showed that he was prepared to lay down his life for the sake of the gospel.
 - He was even willing to be circumcised so as not to offend the Jews who looked at him as an apostate Jew since he had not been circumcised.
- By taking this action, Paul and Silas and Timothy were able to have a very successful time of strengthening and increasing the churches of Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium that Paul and Barnabas had formerly planted.

Now, having completed the work of strengthening formerly established churches,

- the missionaries launch out westward to establish more churches among the Gentiles—
 - This, of course, was the very thing that the Lord had expressly sent Paul to do... He had appointed him to be the apostle to the Gentiles.
- But in a mysterious series of providences, the mission team is blocked by the Lord—not once, but twice.
 - First, they are blocked as they move west down the road to the Roman province of Asia.
 - We are not told how they were blocked, but simply that the Holy Spirit did not permit them to preach the Word in Asia.
 - You can see this in verse 6...
 - It may have been by a prophecy, but we are not told and it is probably best that we do not know.
 - God can block us in any number of ways from doing what we had planned.
 - So they move on, this time endeavouring to go to the province of Bithynia in the north.
 - This was a very civilised area with the great cities of Nicaea, Nicomedia, and Byzantium which became the imperial seat of Constantine and of the Byzantine Empire.

- But verse 7 informs us that the Spirit did not permit them to go to Bithynia either.
 - You can imagine that they must have been somewhat perplexed at this point...
- But they move on—this time, turning west to the north of Asia and moving on to Troas which was only about 15 km from the former city of Troy.
 - Troas was a port city that was a major link between Macedonia and Asia across the Hellespont.
- It would seem that they spent some time here before the Lord gave Paul a vision in the night...
 - And then at last, the Lord tells them where He does want them to go—more or less...
 - Verse 9-10 explain:
 - **Acts 16:9-10: And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.**
 - With this the missionaries make their way across the Hellespont, stopping at the island of Samothrace, and then coming in to port at Neapolis which is the port city that served the great city of Philippi.
 - Philippi was a Roman colony, which meant that it was a little Rome—having Roman law and Roman citizenship for its residents.
 - And here they minister for a time.

But for our purposes today, I want you to notice the mysterious way in which the Lord directed Paul and his team!

- He might have simply revealed by prophecy that they were to go to Philippi, but instead He blocks them twice and then gives them a vision.
 - Surely it was difficult for them to launch out in service to God and be blocked once and then blocked again.
 - But they seem to go on trusting the Lord...

I. You must learn to trust the Lord when He blocks your plans.

- That is the first thing I want you to consider as we look at this text.

A. Mysterious and unexplained providences often characterise our pilgrimage.

1. Do you remember Junior?

- Junior decided to sponsor a child through Word and Deed’s child sponsorship programme.

- It was an excellent thing for him to do and he really meant it, so much so that he found a couple of yards to mow to pay for it.
- However, just as he was getting underway, he broke his leg and had to quit.
- But Junior was not easily daunted...
 - He went out to find another job that he could do with a broken leg... and he found one!
 - Reading mail to an elderly lady in his neighbourhood whose eyesight was failing.
 - But as soon as he began that job, she became ill and had to be taken to the hospital.
 - Junior had great difficulty finding another job that he could do with a broken leg and was not able to follow through with his plans.
 - Junior could not understand why the Lord did not permit him to do this.
 - Do you know why? I don't.

2. There are many things that the Lord uses to block us from our best plans.

a. Many of these are totally outside our control:

- 1) A missionary can become sick or injured and unable to travel.
- 2) Bad weather can keep you from visiting a person in their hour of need.
- 3) You can start a business and be supporting your family and missions and then have someone ruin you with a law suit...
- 4) Our best plans can be blocked by a mechanical failure, by a shortage of funds, by a robbery, by a crisis in our family.
- 5) There are faithful pastors whose ministries are stopped because of persecution—they are cut off by imprisonment or even execution.

b. Sometimes we can also have our plans dashed when it is our fault:

- 1) We can make a stupid decision...starting a business to sell snow skies in Florida—you get the idea...
- 2) We can wreck our plans by negligence—as if Junior had procrastinated instead of breaking his leg and someone else had the mowing job...
- 3) Or a pastor can lose his ministry by falling into sin.

TRANS> But whether it is our own fault or something totally outside our control, there are times we plan to do good things and are kept from it.

3. Some people seem to have this their whole life long.

a. We look at Moses, and we generally think of how successful he was.

- But put yourself in his shoes and consider what it would have been like to live his life—

- Initially, he launched out to deliver Israel at the age of 40, but the Israelites treated his advances in such a way that he ended up fleeing to the desert for 40 years with no intention of trying again.
 - But then the Lord called him, and with great reluctance he goes to Egypt in obedience...
 - But we read about what happened.
 - Instead of delivering the people, Pharaoh is provoked by Moses' demands and ends up turning up the oppression for the Israelites.
 - Now both Egypt and Israel are against him!
 - But finally, Moses is able to lead the people out—
 - but only to have them refuse to take possession of the land that God had given them—
 - The result for Moses is, 40 more years in the wilderness with a bunch of complaining people!
 - Everything he does seems to fail!
 - And then just to put icing on this cake of failure...
 - Moses loses his patience and is informed that he will not be permitted to enter the Promised Land in his lifetime!
 - He dies, a failure.
 - No of course we would not see Moses as a failure,
 - but that surely must have been the way it seemed to him.
 - Everything thing he tried was blocked.
- b. We could show similar stories about Abraham—with famines and still childless when he was 99...
- with Joseph, all his plans thwarted because he was sold into the land of Egypt and made first a slave and then a prisoner.
 - with David—anoointed to be king, but then pursued by Saul for years before coming to the throne.
 - with Jeremiah—preaching to the people, but never having fruit...
 - even with Jesus Himself—called to be the Messiah, but rejected by the leaders and managing only to gather a small following despite all of the miracles He had done...
 - and then as a young man, delivered up to be crucified.
 - Of course He knew what was going on, but still---
- c. There are many more people that we have never heard of because they were blocked from doing much of anything—though they tried.
- Even though they were God's elect,
 - their life in this never seemed to be anything more than an exercise in futility.

TRANS> It is hard to understand the ways of the Lord.

- It is easy to become frustrated, and even to suppose that the Lord is not in it.

B. But the Lord is in it and you must learn to trust Him.

1. We are not told how Paul and his team were blocked, but we are told that the Holy Spirit was the one who did it.
 - It may have been by prophetic revelation, but however it happened, it was clearly of the Lord.
 - Even carefully laid plans for ministry were being blocked, it was all the Lord's doing.

TRANS> And I want to tell you something that may be shocking to you!

2. It is always the Lord's will when your plans, even your most noble plans, are blocked—always, always, always!
 - a. He is absolutely sovereign over every aspect of the entire situation.
 - 1) Many people have a hard time accepting this, but the Bible is clear:
 - Eph 1:11 says that He works all things (not some things but **all** things) according to the council of His will.
 - Prov 16:33 tells us that whenever lots are cast, the decision is always from the LORD.
 - Psalm 135:6 says that whatever the LORD pleases He does, in heaven and earth...
 - In Amos the Lord describes all the calamities that he has sent—everything from enemies to famines—it is all His doing...
 - in Amos 3:6, it says, “If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it?”
 - Even the deeds of wicked men are ultimately in His hands.
 - Nothing is clearer in scripture than the fact that it is the Lord who brought the Assyrians and the Babylonians against His people to lead them into exile.
 - Job was right when he said “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away.”
 - Even when Satan is the instrument, it is still the Lord who ultimately brings it about.
 - 2) Sometimes we can see why the Lord has blocked us.
 - a) We can see it with Moses in the passage we read—
 - God deliberately hardened Pharaoh in order to show that He was LORD.
 - He never would have brought about all the plagues that showed forth His power if Pharaoh had not been hardened.
 - In Romans 9, Paul points out that God Himself testifies to have raised up Pharaoh in order to make His power known.

- b) We can see it with Jesus—
 - wicked men delivered Him over to be crucified,
 - but it was all under God’s providence,
 - in order to save us through His atonement.
 - No one would want to deny that the Lord did this!
 - Peter makes it clear in his preaching—glories in the fact—that God was behind the whole affair...
 - **Acts 4:27-28: For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.**
 - To deny that the Lord was in this is to deny that gave His only Son that we might not perish!
 - c) Sometimes we can see that the Lord is chastening us (as with the exile—they knew that God was punishing them).
 - We know that God is blocking us because of our sin.
- 3) But there are other times we cannot see any reason for it...
- For Paul, it was simply that the Lord had somewhere else for him to go.
 - Think of what it was like for Joseph before he knew the outcome.
 - Think of what it was like for Jesus’ disciples when they saw their master on the cross—before they knew the outcome.
 - They found out the reason...
 - But sometimes we **never** know the reason.
 - It would seem that Job never really knew the reason for his calamities.
 - He died with God have restored everything, and having benefitted much from his ordeal, but he never knew why.
 - There are others who never see anything restored in this world—but who die in seeming futility.
3. When you are in the middle of an ordeal—blocked from serving God as far as you can tell—this is when your faith is the most tested.
- a. This is when you have to absolutely trust your heavenly Father.
 - 1) Oh my brothers and sisters!
 - Know that He is *so* much higher than you.
 - so much higher!
 - He is the sovereign Lord who made heaven and earth!

- He is the One who calls all the stars by name and who put each of them in their places.
 - He is the One who created our bodies and carefully wove all the different parts together.
 - You can fully trust Him to run things.
 - And not only is He of infinite, unsearchable power and dominion,
 - He is also higher—much, much higher—than us in His faithfulness and in His goodness and kindness.
 - Love continually flows from His divine nature.
 - Perfect rectitude belongs to Him.
 - If it were not for the fall—if we were not treasonous wretches who tried to overthrow His benevolent government...
 - We would see nothing but sheer goodness and kindness and generosity from Him.
 - All of our misery and all of our sorrows are but His proper and wise response to us in our wickedness.
 - But His purpose toward all of whom He has redeemed is all mercy and grace—
 - We have a future and hope of blessing because He has appointed us to salvation...
 - And though we must walk through trouble and affliction in this world,
 - It is only for a time until His purposes are fulfilled.
- 2) When things go awry with your plans, you don't have to know the reason why—you just have to trust Him.
- By the way, your children do not always have to know the reason why either.
 - If you tell them it's time to leave the park, they need to honour you and trust you without demanding why.
 - As obedient children, let us thus serve our Father in heaven.
 - If He has blocked our plans and thwarted our way, we may not know all His reasons—it is enough to know that He has done it... it is the Lord... trust Him.
- b. Even your best plans—your most godly plans—can be completely shattered for no apparent reason!
- Do not doubt that it is the Lord!!!
 - Rest in the fact that He has the matter in hand and that He is both wise and good and knows exactly what He is doing!
 - This is much easier said than done—especially when the trouble and affliction goes on and on and never seems to end.

- When instead of deliverance, the Egyptian task masters place heavier demands on you and the whip comes down again and again.
- The Lord is still just as gracious as ever—just as true and just as faithful.
 - He is high, high above you—trust Him—Keep trusting Him.
 - And even though you do not understand why He hinders you, keep on obeying Him.

TRANS> And this brings us to another important lesson from this passage...

- We must learn here from Paul and the others not only to trust the Lord when He blocks our way,
 - but also to keep on following His directives.

II. We must learn how to follow the directive will of God.

A. The first principle in following the Lord is to follow His clear commandments.

1. Paul was clearly directed to take the gospel to the Gentiles... so he does.
 - a. Paul was unique in that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ.
 - That means that he was sent directly by Jesus Christ.
 - An apostle is someone who is officially sent by another who is in authority.
 - The nature of your apostleship depends upon who sent you.
 - In Hebrews, Jesus is called “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.
 - He is *the* Apostle because He alone was sent by the Father.
 - The Father spoke directly to Him to commission Him.
 - The twelve apostles and Paul are unique because they were sent directly by Jesus Christ.
 - That means that Jesus spoke to them and commissioned them.
 - Then you have other apostles who were sent by the church—not directly by Jesus Christ.
 - They do not have the same authority—we usually call them missionaries because they are sent by the church—not directly by Jesus.
 - Because he was an apostle, that meant that Christ has spoken directly to him when He called him into service as an apostle.
 - He had a clear and direct command to go and preach to the Gentiles.

TRANS> We don't have God speaking to directly to us in this way.

- b. But we too have God's clear commandments in the word!
 - We are not personally commanded by Christ to go to the Gentiles, for we do not have Him personally speaking to us in that way...
 - But we have His will revealed for us in Holy Scripture.

- He tells you what to do if you are a child, a husband, a father, a wife, a mother, a servant, a minister of the gospel, a judge...
 - He tells you how to treat God and how to treat your neighbour and your enemy.
2. You are to do all that you have been commanded
- a. There are things that are plainly prohibited.
 - You are not to worship other gods or make idols by which you worship the true God.
 - You are not to take God's name in vain or profane the Sabbath...
 - You are not to kill or steal or speak against your neighbour falsely... nor are you to covet anything that belongs to your neighbour.
 - b. There are duties that are clearly enjoined—these are not to be set aside.
 - These speak far into your life—like the duty to provide for you household, or the duty to honour and obey your superiors.
 - If you mom told you to wash the dishes, God has just directed you to do so except in very unusual circumstances...
 - Because He tells you to obey your mother.
 - There is the duty of worship and the duty of preaching the gospel to the nations that is given to the whole church.
 - There is the duty to love your enemies and to reach out to the poor and to pray for all men.

TRANS> All of these prohibitions and duties are God's directives.

- This is where you find His will.
 - If you focus on all of these, you will have more than enough to keep you busy for the rest of your life!
- But there are many who get side tracked looking for God's directives elsewhere.
 - That leads us to our second point about following His directives.

B. Second, do not look for revelation that God has not given to you!

1. Paul's default mode was to use wisdom and prudence to decide where to go to minister.
 - a. The Lord had told him to go to the Gentiles, but not to which Gentiles.
 - So Paul just obeyed what he was told.
 - He went out to minister to the Gentiles, and because the Lord had not told him more specific details, he set his own course.
 - b. You can see the wisdom that he used...
 - 1) First, he goes first to revisit the churches that he had established.
 - He was always burdened for those who had received the gospel.
 - He yearned for them to continue in the Lord and new that Satan walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

- Already he had tried to throw them with the Judaizers who tried to add to the gospel of free grace in Christ.
 - He is still trying to do that to this day.
 - It was very wise for Paul to return to the churches he had planted to check up on them and to strengthen them.
- 2) After that was done, he moved on to new territory, using wisdom and prudence—
- a) He headed down the road toward Asia—Colossae was about 250 kilometers from Pisidian Antioch and then Ephesus was another 250 kilos.
- In heading for these cities to preach the gospel, the apostle was simply obeying what God had told him.
 - He was going to preach to the Gentiles as he had been told in what logically seemed like “the next place.”
 - In Southern Galatia, he had just followed the road.
- b) He surely prayed for wisdom in making his plans,
- but he did not try to go beyond what God had told him—
 - it was up to Paul, unless God told him otherwise, to decide where to go next—
 - And that is why he persistently does this, as is most evident in our text.
 - God stops him from going one direction, and Paul goes on to the next place that seems best...Bithynia...
 - God stops him from going that direction, and Paul again goes on to the next logical place...Troas...
2. God leaves many things up to you to decide!
- a. If He has not given you specific instructions, you look for them in vain!
- For example, He does not tell you one specific person to marry—
 - He has given you guidelines to be sure—
 - they must be a believer, for example—and you are not to cohabit outside of holy marriage.
 - If you are a woman, the man must meet your father’s approval.
 - There are directives, but not specifics.
 - If you go looking for God to give you some special guidance, you are going beyond what He has given you to go on.
 - You may even make a foolish decision if you conclude that He told you to marry a certain person.
 - Once you do that, there is nothing more to evaluate—wisdom and prudence can take a hike—God has spoken!

- And chances are His “voice” that you think you are hearing is nothing more than your excited passion.
 - I know of two young men who concluded that God had directed them to certain young women...
 - In both cases, the woman did not believe it to be God’s will, and in both cases, the women are happily married and the men are struggling along with their faith...
 - one of them has had two failed marriages already.
 - Yet, both were sure that God had led them to these women!
- b. No my brothers and sisters!
- The Lord does not command you in such specific details.
 - Do not try to find a command where a command is not issued.
 - Instead give yourself over to earnestly obey all that He has clearly commanded,
 - and endeavour to apply His word in making specific decisions.
 - For example, if you are trying to decide what job to take...
 - there are many matters that should be prayerfully considered...
 - And I mean that about prayer—you should pray for wisdom to make a good decision—not for which decision you should make!
 - Here are six things to prayerfully consider in choosing a job...
 - First, ask yourself if it is lawful (being an assassin or strip dancer might pay well... but it is not lawful)
 - Second, would taking it involve me in sin or put me in a place of unnecessary temptation (working a bar when I have a drinking problem)?
 - Third, would it keep me from fulfilling my duties (say to my family—being a jungle missionary when I have a family—or taking a job that requires me to work on Sunday)
 - Fourth, will it pay the bills—can I provide for my family and give to others.
 - Fifth, is it something I believe that I would be able to do well?
 - Sixth, is it something I want to do...
 - If all the other things are met, and there are two jobs to choose between, take the one you like best!
 - Don’t go trying to get the Lord to tell you which one to take—make the choice and enjoy!

3. There are a number of errors that people fall into when they expect God to give them specific directions.

- a. First, they fall into a passive mode...waiting for some special motion of the Spirit.
 - Have you ever met anyone like that?
 - Instead of going on and serving God, they are always waiting to hear from God.
 - They are idle.
 - If Paul had been like that, he would have stayed in Antioch until God told him where to go specifically.
 - As it turned out, the Lord had specific instructions for him, but he unfolded them as Paul went along...
 - And there were many things that Paul did without specific instructions
 - (like visiting the already established churches and like going to Troas).
 - Of course this passivity can also be a problem for those who are not looking for specific direction...
 - You can keep on trying to decide what is best by wisdom and prudence and never come up with a decision.
 - So watch out for that too.
 - Years ago, when I tried looked for specific directives from God,
 - I used to get paralysed waiting for God's voice to tell me what to preach on...
 - and now I can still get paralysed trying to decide what I ought to preach on.
- b. A second error of those who seek specific directives is that they take up the practice of reading divine directives into everything.
 - It is almost like a kind of Christian sorcery where you are looking for various signs to lead you or warn you—like reading the stars or tea leaves.
 - It can be as simple as looking a circumstances such as closed and opened doors, and taking these as *directives*.
 - They are *opportunities* that God has brought across your path;
 - but *opportunities* are not the same as *directives*.
 - Just because a door of opportunity opens up to you does not mean that you are to walk through it!
 - You may have an open door to join and gang and make a lot of money selling drugs—but that does not mean that God is calling you do that—just because the door is opened.
 - And a closed door may be a door that you ought to break down.
 - If you are a fireman and the door is bolted shut and the building is burning and people are inside,

- God is not directing you to stay out by a closed door!
 - You ought to break that door down and go and rescue those people!
 - God's most faithful servants are the ones who break through closed doors all the time.
 - There are many other things that are wrongly interpreted as directives...
 - Impressions are used—a strong feeling that God wants you to take this or that course of action...
 - The impression may just be the result of the discount pizza you ate for supper.
 - But it may even be more than that...
 - It may indeed be that you have some intuitive power—perhaps an awareness that someone is in trouble...
 - Well, go ahead and call them to see if they are okay.
 - Your impression may be right, but don't confuse an impression of intuition as if it were God's voice.
 - It is simply a way—a remarkable way—of finding out that someone needs help.
 - And then there are coincidences...
 - Those looking for guidance outside the Word will often read into coincidences and interpret them as God telling them to do something...
 - But this is a very uncertain way to hear the voice of God.
 - He is sovereign over all your circumstances—but He does not send them to us with directives attached.
- c. A third error that is often found in those who seek for specific directives is inappropriate guilt when things go wrong.
- These persons will assume that that they failed to listen to God whenever something goes wrong...
 - They have married the wrong person...
 - Or they wrongly tried to plant a church in a certain place...
 - It may be that there were errors in judgement that were made, but it was not a matter of failing to hear God speak!
 - You may have made a bad decision because you were too busy trying to hear his directives when you should have been thinking the matter through more carefully.
 - If a young man goes to university with plans to be a dentist, but then he can't get through biology...

- he does not need to suppose that he somehow disobeyed God in trying.
- He was doing the will of God in preparing himself for a calling.
 - He and others may have failed to properly assess his abilities, but there was no disobedience to God in trying.
 - He doesn't need to try to gain a better facility at reading into God's will...
 - He needs to go on and do something else.
 - He was already doing the will of God, but God has providentially changed his direction,
 - so he needs to keep on doing the will of God and prepare himself for a calling—only now it will be a different calling.
 - Do you see how this is just what Paul did?
 - He kept the main duty before him and kept on going.

TRANS> That is what you need to do too.

- Keep on obeying what is commanded and use Christian wisdom and prudence to make important decisions.
 - God by His providence will bring you to the place that He has planned for you to be.
 - And then it is very important how you respond.

III. Give thanks and joyfully serve the Lord in the place to which His providence has brought you.

A. The Lord brings us to the place where He wants us to serve.

1. God made it clear to Paul that He had brought him to Macedonia to preach.
 - a. He worked in this situation in such a way that there would be no doubt but that God had put them there.
 - The Lord gave Paul the vision of the Macedonian man calling for them to come over and help...
 - Paul apparently discussed this vision with his companions,
 - because verse 10 indicates that they helped him in interpreting the vision to mean that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel there.
 - Even with such a vision they thought the matter through as the word translated “concluding” indicates.
 - b. All of this preventing them from going here and there, and then directing them at last by a vision,
 - made it very certain to the missionaries that God wanted them there.

- This is that extraordinary revelation that was associated with the apostles.
 - We should not ordinarily expect it in our day.
2. But what we can learn from this is similar to what we have often learned from Acts...
- That God makes His work visible—which is usually invisible.
 - Remember how He made visible the fact that the Holy Spirit is poured out on all who believe by making the Spirit’s coming visible and audible at Pentecost?
 - And how He accompanied the Spirit’s coming with signs and wonders?
 - And remember how He gave a visible sign that He answers His peoples’ prayer when He shook the place where they prayed?
 - And remember how He showed the displeasure He has toward hypocrisy by putting Ananias and Sapphira to death?
 - So now we can learn from this incident that God always works to bring us to the place He wants us to be.
 - We know that He is absolutely sovereign, so we know that this is so—and here in Acts 16, this is made conspicuous to us.
3. Brothers and sisters, you need to know that you are always in the place that God has appointed for you!
- a. It doesn’t matter if you have been rebellious and have been severely chastened of the Lord...
- It doesn’t matter what kind of mess you may be in now, what wrongs people have done to you, what sicknesses or troubles have hindered you.
 - Where you are today is where God has brought you thus far.
 - You may regret decisions you have made, you may even say that you would do things differently if you could go back...
 - But God has put you where you are and you are to thank Him and to trust Him and to zealously serve Him with your all.
- b. Remember that He is the sovereign Lord.
- Remember that He has nothing but good-will toward you if you are His elect.
 - You may not understand the winding, difficult, troubled path that He has brought you down.
 - You may not understand the load of difficulties that surround you right now.

- But what you can know for sure that your gracious Lord has brought it to pass and He intends you no harm—only the greatest good.
- That is why joyful, trusting submission is the only way to respond.
 - He does all things well!
 - If you are His child, grace will prevail, grace will have the final word.
- c. One of the best things about God’s guidance is that you don’t have to worry about it.
 - The Lord is able to get you to where He wants you to be—and that, in fact, is where you are right now.
 - Your concern is to honour Him there—to obey Him where you are and to serve Him with joyful submission.
 - It may be a place of suffering—serve Him and obey Him there.
 - It may be a place of great prosperity—serve Him and obey Him there.
 - It may be a place of great opportunity or a place of very little opportunity—but it is the place He had brought you and it is there that you are to serve Him.
 - You may have made mistakes or committed sins that brought you to that place,
 - But God did not make any mistake at all in bringing you there.
 - And right now, you can joyfully submit to the place and the circumstances that He has given you and obey Him.
 - Oh yes, you can try to go on from where you are...
 - It may be that obeying the Lord involves going on...
 - But all you need to worry about is that you are zealously serving Him and doing what He has commanded.

B. But there is something else revealed here too that is very precious...

1. The man from Macedonia’s words remind us that the Lord has entrusted us with a precious treasure that is desperately needed by others!
 - The man from Macedonia stands and pleads, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”
 - My dear brothers and sisters, Paul and his companions were privileged to be in possession of that which could be of great help to the Macedonians.
 - We must never forget it in a world where so many people despise the gospel!
 - Here was a treasure that could set guilty sinners free from bondage to sin and Satan and death!

- Here was a gospel that promised the complete remission of sins through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.
 - Here was a message of God's great love, revealing His pure goodness and kindness and mercy.
 - Here was a revelation of God's holiness that cannot look upon sin, but is able to conquer sin in all who call upon Him.
 - Here was deliverance from everlasting condemnation to everlasting life in glory with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!
 - Help indeed!
 - Such help as all men everywhere need!
2. We also have this help in our possession!
- We have the very same gospel of grace with the very same power.
 - And we who know Christ can all testify how much it has helped us!
 - We who were lost in darkness are now in the light.
 - We have the hope of glory.
 - And we too are called to share this precious treasure among the nations!
 - And you can share it with your family and with your friends and with the people you meet.
 - They desperately need it!

Conclusion

So you see the whole conclusion of the matter!

- God has brought you—you who believe—to the place that you are in—wherever that may be...
 - He often brings us on a very twisting path and we are often hindered from doing many things that we have wanted to do...
- But you are where you are now by His doing...
 - And you have in your possession the precious gospel that has more help in it than all the treasures of the world combined.
 - Rejoice wherever you are and serve the Lord with gladness.