

LEWES FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Lord's Day Morning

Date 21st November 2021 Hymns 170, 431, 437 Read: Acts 16:6-12 Text Acts 16:6-8

Series: Philippians (1) Title: The Holy Spirit's Leading In The Lives His People

I want to begin a new series on Sunday mornings and the Lord has impressed upon my heart the book of Philippians.

In **verse 1** we read "**to all saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi...**" now before we enter into book itself, I thought it necessary to spend the opening messages upon the words **at Philippi**, and see how this church came into being.

In reading about the background to the church at Philippi in **Acts 16:6-40** there are lessons to thrill our hearts.

In that account we read how Paul and the missionary team of Luke, Silas and Timothy were lead to Philippi.

We read of the Gospel spreading into Europe. Then the first three people saved by the grace of God to start to Church at Philippi.

The Holy Spirit ministered to the lives of His people in opening and closing doors leading them to Philippi.

I want today to minister upon the Holy Spirit in the lives of His people.

I FIRST, THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIVES OF HIS PEOPLE.

In Acts 16 we are given details regarding Paul's second missionary journey, which really covers **Acts 15:36** through to **Acts 18.**

The missionaries journey & route was stated in **Acts 15:36** "***let us go again and visit the brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they go.***" (They travelled through Syria, and Ci-li-ci-a, Derbe and Lystra.)

Paul had preached the gospel of Jesus Christ as centring upon His glorious person, death, burial and Resurrection.

We read at the end of **verse 5** “**and so were the churches established in the faith and increased in number daily.**”

God was moving by His Spirit, souls for whom Christ died were added unto the Church. Day by Day, men and woman saw themselves as guilty sinners before the righteous judge of all the earth.

According to the holy, and righteous standard of God’s law, sin was exposed, He marked iniquity in their lives that none could stand, none could claim any righteousness of their own,

and therefore the only thing they could do was to cry unto God for pardon of sin, and they were saved by faith in Christ alone, as the Holy Spirit applied the benefits of Christ’s redemptive work to their hearts, and then as believers they were strengthen in the gospel.

Having left those places Paul and the missionary team, now desired to go further into the world and preach the gospel.

They started preaching the Gospel east of Asia or Asia minor what is now our present day Turkey. God gave much success.

To spread the Gospel by going west seemed the next way to go.

They set their heart on western Asia, to advance further central in Asia for the purpose as **verse 6** states **to preach the word in Asia**. To Paul, Asia as any place needed to hear the gospel. in his mind it was the next place serve God.

The word has been preached on the borders or surrounding areas but now they desired to go central, deeper in.

However, we read in **verse 6** they “**were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.**” These words are striking, and from a human view point not fully understood and grasped,

because God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts, But His ways and thoughts are higher than ours.

They "**were forbidden of the Holy Ghost..**" The word **forbidden** means **prevent, to refuse, to withhold**.

The idea is to cause something not to happen, to keep back.

The Holy Ghost At this time did permit them to go to Asia, though the gospel would reach central Asia on another occasion, a later date.

Therefore, we must look at these words by setting our minds on things above we must look at these words as we look unto Jesus the author and finisher of the faith, for that is the only way we will understand them.

In other words, we must look at these words to see that God by His Holy Spirit had a purpose for not permitting Paul and the team to enter the area of Asia at this time.

The spirit prevented them, the door was shut. It was not God's will at that time for them to go deeper in the area of Asia.

Now I understand, from **verses 6-40**, we can look forward and back and re read to see what God was doing, and why the Holy Spirit forbid them going into Asia, and we conclude the Holy Spirit was in full control, He knew what He was doing.

We follow the map and see where the Spirit lead Paul.

Paul and the team had an ambition to go into Asia for good reasons and a genuine purpose, to preach the gospel, but the spirit forbid them.

He was sovereign in directing them. It may be God will take you a different direction, He always shuts one door to open another.

During this time Paul may not have fully understood the way God was leading the team by His Spirit, but He was in full control.

God always has a purpose and plan to Glorify Himself and bless His people in the ways He leads.

Therefore, He will always work in His Creation but also in the lives of His people, according to the good pleasure of His will to accomplish His redemptive purposes in Christ.

He is always working in our lives, whether we know it not, always directing and leading. Paul said in **Romans 8:28** “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*”

Psalm 37:23 “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.* The word **ordered** means *directed*. **Proverbs 3:6** “*...He shall direct thy path.*”

Therefore, we learn the Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God’s people.

In every area of our life, He knows what He is doing and where He is leading me. You can trust His leading at all times. **2 Samuel 22:31** “*As for God, His way is perfect;*

Whether the door is opened or closed, the pathway is clear or shut, it is still God’s hand that leads.

From the moment we were called unto the fellowship in gospel, saved by grace and until we reach heaven, God in His sovereignty by His Spirit will always guide and work in the lives of His people to make them more like Christ, to live a spirit filled life and follow His leading.

This is clearly demonstrated in the life of Christ when the Spirit came upon Him for service, and led Him, **Matthew 4:1** “*Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil,* for the purpose to show there is victory over every enemy and devilish attack, through Jesus Christ & His word.

II SECOND, THE STOPS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIVES OF HIS PEOPLE.

When Paul, and the missionary team, left the area that they were labouring in the word of the Lord, **verse 6** states, as they had planned to go into Asia they “**were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.**”

The Spirit closing one door did not mean every other door would be closed. Asia was closed, therefore, they were to press on to another place to preach the word.

At this stage they had no clear direction, there is no specific place that came to mind, and so they continued the clearest path **Northwest**, away from Asia, and their steps brought them as **verse 7** confirms to “...**Mys-i-a**...” it is at “...**Mys-i-a**...” “..**they assayed to go into Bi-thyn-ia.**”.

However we read again, at the end of **verse 7** “**but the Spirit suffered them not.**” The phrase **suffered**” means **to allow or permit**. It is strong word, followed by the word not, which greatly emphasis that **the Spirit absolutely did not permit them.**

Since the Spirit suffered them not, then the Spirit did **not allow** them **go into Bi-thyn-ia.**” The Spirit did **not give permission, nor His authorisation or His approval go into Bi-thyn-ia.**”.

Notice once again the opening words in **verse 7** “..**they assayed to go into Bi-thyn-ia.**” The word **assayed** means **to attempt, examine, to prove.** The idea is to try and see whether a thing can be done.

What is also interesting about this word assayed, is that it is in the **continual tense.**

They kept on attempting to go into Bi-thyn-ia.” They continually examined every way **to go into Bi-thyn-ia.**” But no way was opened, every attempt failed.

No matter how hard they tried, attempted, and examined **to go into Bi-thyn-ia**,” it came to nothing, why, because **verse 7** “**the Spirit suffered them not.**” The Holy Spirit did not give the permission **to go into Bi-thyn-ia**,”

Now at that stage a decision must be made either keep attempting **to go into Bi-thyn-ia**,” or submit to God’s will and learn By His Holy Spirit He has closed the door.

He has not given the permission the authorisation to go forward in this matter.

Im glad we read in **verse 8** **and they passing through Mys-i-a, came down to Tro-as.**” The word **passing through** gives the idea **to move forward, to pass by**, it is the same word used in **verse 6** **gone throughout.**

They stopped trying to open a closed door, but instead they moved forward. They surrendered to the Holy Spirit’s leading.

They didn’t dwell at **Mys-i-a**, lamenting over a closed door to **Bi-thyn-ia**,” wondering what if, if only, what could have been.

They moved onward, they passed by the door that was closed, and went to the next area once again to know the leading of the Lord in this place.

What a lesson believer for our hearts, maybe you have made a decision about a particular matter concerning your present and future, a Job, looking for a church to worship, a new place to live, what school or collage to attend what career in life to pursue, even who to marry.

Maybe you as a Christian are in a relationship with another Christian but it appears in all these areas there is no going forward, there seems to be a blockage, a stoppage, something is not right, but you continually attempt to make it work, you sense

the door is closed, but you want to wedge it open or keep looking through the window still one eye on it.

On that we must beware, for if the Holy Spirit does not give permission to take a certain course, or continue in a certain direction, but we keep trying to force open a closed door that pleases self, we will be living and labouring outside the very best that God has for us.

while God will never leave His people nor forsake them, He will withhold His blessings upon our lives.

This is not a matter of persistent prayer, rather this the recognition the Holy Spirit has not given the permission for you to forward in this decision, or pursue this relationship. His blessing is not behind it. The Holy Spirit has put a stop to it.

we must surrender to the will of God, and pass through, forward in what God has given permission to do, where He wants us to be, by leaving the closed door at this time in our life.

If God by the power of the Holy Spirit closes a door and puts a stop on the matter at this time of our lives, don't waste time and energy over what could have been, might have been, just pass by it and learn, while our steps are divinely ordered, so are our stops.

The door opened and closed, are all ordered by God and directed by the Holy Spirit.

Always remember, when the Spirit closes a door, stops you going further in any situation, you never miss out, Rather He is stopping you from doing and going where God has forbidden In order to guide where God wants you do, go, be, and enjoy His blessing.

Think of the starts and stops of Christ at different places, villages, cites. His disciples didn't understand at times why He came that path He did or talk to the people did, as in **Luke 19:1-6,** To visit

Zacchaeus, a thief, the worst of men, Christ said this day is salvation come to this house. On that day Zacchaeus received Him joyfully.

III THIRD, THE STEPS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIVES OF HIS PEOPLE.

verse 8 *and they passing through Mys-i-a, came down to Tro-as.*” The Holy Spirit forbid or prevented entry into Asia and did not give permission *to go into Bi-thyn-ia,*” because God wanted Paul to be a **Tro-as** to hear His word in order to go into Macedonia then to Philippi. See how the Spirit’s leading our steps all come together.

It was late at night and so the team spent the night at Tro-as, and there Paul heard a call to come over and help us, as he said in the morning **v9** *the Lord had called us.*

God by His Spirit leads our steps, our course in life to be where He wants us to be.

Now Paul didn’t plan for Tro-as, nor Macedonia, or Philippi, they never crossed his mind. He had not contemplated crossing to Europe.

He thought of Asia that’s where Paul wanted to be, but God showed by the leading of the Spirit in his life, He decreed Paul and the team to go over to Macedonia.

Keep this before you, It was safer for Paul to be in Tro-as, than to be in Asia preaching the gospel.

The difference is at Tro-as the Holy Spirit gave permission, to go to Macedonia.

It was here, we can say the words of **Rev 3:8** *“I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.* That is the key, above our own ambitions even if they are good, and right, but to be where God wants me to be, doing what God wants me to do,

to have His approval, the Spirit's permission, Christ likeness, that is to be successful in life.

We may have our lives planned out, the path to pursue, and we set our heart on people, and location, but Believer in every area of life seek as Christ did, when He said in **John 6:38** "***For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.***

Notice Psalmists words but see they in their highest fulfilment in Christ, **Psalm 16:8**, '***I have set the Lord always before Me***'.

Make sure your decisions are approved of God, lead by the Spirit, its only then you can truly serve Christ and finish the work He has given you to do.