



Sermon Text: Acts 16:6-10

Sermon Date: June 17, 2018

On Sunday, we got a fascinating glimpse into the various ways God guides His people to accomplish His purposes. As Christians, we have all prayed for God's guidance. Many of us have agonized in prayer, asking Him to make known His will in specific areas of our lives. How does He guide us? In our text and the surrounding context, we witness some of the ways God leads His people.

1. **GOD GUIDES THROUGH HIS WORD—THE BIBLE.** As we seek God's will, we must always begin by obeying His revealed will in the Bible. In many ways, He has already told us what we are to do through the instructions of His Word. Paul & his mission team don't ask if it's God's will for them to be a witness to Christ's saving work; God had already told every Christian they are supposed to do that (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20).
2. **GOD GUIDES THROUGH HUMAN INITIATIVE.** In Acts 15:36, Paul takes the initiative to set off on a second missionary journey. Knowing the general will of God to make disciples in all nation, he obeys without receiving specific instruction. Seeking God's will should not cause passivity within us. We too must take common sense, Bible-based initiative.
3. **GOD GUIDES THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES, OFTEN THROUGH CLOSED DOORS.** Two times in our text, God mysteriously shuts down Paul's plans even though his plans seemed logical. While Paul and his companions were undoubtedly confused and probably frustrated, they didn't quit. They understood that God sovereignly guides us to where He wants us to be by providentially keeping us from going other places.
4. **GOD GUIDES THROUGH SUPERNATURAL ILLUMINATION.** Having twice thwarted Paul's plans, God suddenly makes His purpose plain to them in a supernatural vision. While this form of guidance is rare & unexpected, it is legitimate. This is what we all want from God, but we must guard against allowing our excitement about this rare guidance to diminish our appreciation for the miracle of God's written Word.
5. **GOD GUIDES RATIONALLY AND IN COMMUNITY.** Even after seeing a supernatural vision, Paul and his companions still "concluded" that God was calling them to go to Macedonia. They put the pieces together and made a rational conclusion based on the evidence. And Paul did this in community with his team, not in isolation. If the great Apostle Paul still consulted the wisdom of his godly friends, then who are we to think we can discern God's will all alone?
6. **GOD GUIDES GRADUALLY, OFTEN UNEXPECTEDLY.** We don't know why God didn't give them a vision at the beginning of their travels instead of the end, but that is often how He guides His people—one step at a time. In this way, God requires us to walk by faith, to remain in close fellowship with Him.

This text forces us to ask if we are willing to go wherever God leads. Whose plan are we seeking to follow in our daily lives. How do you respond when your plans are thwarted? Do you grow despondent or angry when doors keep closing? David Livingstone, pioneer missionary to Africa in 19th century said, "Without Christ, not one step; with him, anywhere!" May that too be our motto.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?
2. Does it fill you with comfort and assurance or anger and contempt that you are not the master of your own universe, but that God guides His people to accomplish His purposes?
3. Of the 6 ways God guides, which one stood out to you the most & why?
4. How do you respond when your plans are thwarted and doors of opportunity keep getting shut?