

# On a mission from God

## Week 8 – “On a mission from God”

This week's Reading Plan covered Acts 15, 16, 17 and 18 where Paul is on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey and just starting his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey. He is on 'a mission from God'.

During the service today we have had a guest speaker (Martin Dunkley) to hear about the kingdom building mission of Tees Valley Community Church in the North East. It is important to remember that Tees Valley journey is their journey and our journey is our journey – both equally important before God. Secondly to remember mission is for God's glory, not ours. We just serve and play our part in a much bigger kingdom plan. We do it through the strength and working of the Holy Spirit, not our own.

In this 'Going Deeper' we will look at aspects of Acts 15 to Acts 18 and then reflect on Acts 6 v1-7 and the points Martin raised.

### Acts 15

The church in Antioch and Jerusalem is in debate about whether newly converted Gentiles need to follow Jewish law and traditions. The church is slipping back into 'legalism', entry rules and traditions for being a believer – the very thing that Jesus came to set us free from. We read that they came to an agreement – “we believe that we are all saved in the same way” (v11).

**Questions:** In what ways might we (individually and as a church family) have added 'man made rules' in our daily walk as a Christian and or in the way that we attend church services? What might we need to 'put off' and 'put on' as we replant?

This also draws out the importance of dialogue as a church family. To test ideas, views and activities without getting defensive or hurt. Above all to seek God on what he thinks. Engagement, dialogue and listening shows strong leadership and avoids the perception of command and control dictatorship or bureaucracy. We are family and all on a journey together.

A letter of the agreed position goes back from Jerusalem to the other churches and we read people were encouraged and as 'a result of this there was 'proof of miraculous signs and wonders'. Praise God.

However we read at the end of Acts 15 the sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabus and they part ways. It is okay to have a different view on something but we need to work things out. Adam covered this last week in his message, but again it is worth asking:

**Questions:** how do we handle situations of conflict? Do we fight, flight or reconcile? Are there unresolved areas of disagreement or are we currently in conflict? What are we going to do about it?

***“In the essentials, UNITY”. In the non-essentials, LIBERTY. In all things, LOVE.”*** Augustine of Hippo (AD 354 – AD 430)

### Acts 16

This is where Paul's second missionary journey starts and this was covered during week 5 of our series – “Happy Feet”. So in summary only:

- The missionary journey starts in Asia Minor and through the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the vision of the Macedonian Man, Paul sails to Greece, travelling up to Philippi.
- At Philippi we hear of the first recorded European convert (Lydia) and the church begins to grow
- Paul and Silas are put in prison, there is the heaven-sent earthquake, their chains are loosed and the Jailer and family come to faith. They are then released.

## Acts 17

The mission moves west to Thessalonica and Paul starts preaching in the synagogues. There is strong local resistance and people are unwilling to accept the teaching. Although some believe they move on to Berea where they are 'more open-minded'. The mission is going well, but then a crowd of Jews follow them down from Thessalonica to disrupt the mission and cause trouble.

**Questions:** How teachable are we? For those that have been a Christian and / or been in our church for a long time, do we think we know it all? Have we built beliefs and practices that we are immovable in - even if fresh revelation is presented to us? Are we guilty of 'friendly fire' towards our church family members? Do we need to soften our hearts or even repent?

**Questions:** If we do have deep Bible knowledge and experience, what are we doing to pass this on to others and encourage them? Is there more that you could do to be a disciple maker?

They leave Berea and go on to Athens, arguably the capital of the philosophical world at that time. There are idols and altars everywhere to pagan 'gods' Through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, on Mars Hill Paul sees an altar which has no 'god' labelled to it and proclaims "*To the Unknown God. This God who you worship without knowing is the one I'm talking about*". He goes on to preach from this angle and people listen, some are saved. People come to faith in many ways.

Some people's faith journey is advanced through depth of reason and argument, perhaps evidence based. Others it is more experiential. It is important to be ready: *'if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it'* (1 Peter 3 v15). *"The Holy Spirit will give you the words to say at the moment when you need them"* (Luke 12 v12). However only some have the gift to be able to debate at a deep academic level.

**Questions:** Do you have an interest and are good at 'apologetics'? Is this a gift you could use in the church to support others as they reach people for Christ?

## Acts 18

Paul moves on to Corinth. Here he meets Aquilla and his wife Priscilla who, apart from also being tent makers, end up being real partners in mission as the early church grows. They are mentioned a number of times in the Bible. It is not long before they meet opposition again from the local Jews. Paul is reminded by The Lord in a vision "*Don't be afraid! Speak out, don't be silent. For I am with you .....*" (v 9 & 10). He does speak out and the mission is fruitful.

Paul stays in Corinth for 1 ½ years. He decides to set sail to return to Antioch (Syria) and takes Aquilla and Priscilla with him. They arrive at the port of Ephesus where he leaves Aquilla and Priscilla and he then goes on to Jerusalem and then ending up back in Antioch. Whilst Aquilla and Priscilla are in Ephesus, they continue ministry. We read how they both disciple / teach Apollos, who later on turns out to be instrumental in the growth of the early church.

## On a mission from God – all about PIE

It is inspiring hearing about Paul's missionary journeys and the kingdom impact. We have been casting vision over the last 2 months and one element we have talked about is 'PIE' (10 January message). The kingdom impact of this prophetic picture of PIE is that:

1. It presents a much wider mission field than 'attractional Sunday church'
2. It encourages us to step out and serve in line with our gifts and / or where God calls us to go

**Questions:** Has God been speaking to you about where your 'slice' of mission is and what he would have you do? If not, why not find someone to pray this through with you and ask that God will reveal it to you?

## Martin Dunkley - Acts 6 v1-7

Martin reminded us that it is important that any social action we do is grounded in 'the why' – in Jesus name! We need to be clear about our identity and why we feel compelled to do something. In his summary about Acts 6 v1-7, he said there were three things going on:

1. Practical, tangible love and care to those in need
2. Attention to prayer
3. Attention to ministry of the Word

As a result: "So the Word of God spread" (v7) there was a move of God, an INCREASE !

**Questions:** What do you think the needs are in your street / neighbourhood are? What about Dawlish? What do you feel called to do to meet that need? How about getting more involved in ROC Dawlish? (Speak to Mark and Jo)



**Reading plan for this week:** Acts 19 and Acts 20

**Next Sunday:** "Home Alone" Speaker Andy Coombes (Acts 20 v17-38, Revelation 2 v1-7, Hebrews 13v17)