

The “No’s” of God Acts 16:6-10

It was so sad to finish the Gospels last week but now so exciting to be reading the book of Acts. This is the history of the church; of you and me and how God brought Gentiles into his redemptive grace.

One of the wonderful things about reading Acts chronologically is that we will also read the epistles as they were written during the book of Acts. We’ve already read James because it is written at the time of the Jerusalem council to explain grace and works. This week we’ll read Galatians because it too is a result of the Jerusalem council in its defense of Gentiles as part of God’s plan.

If you have not been reading the Bible chronologically with us, you must start.

As we read last week, I remembered....

Acts 2 – Peter standing at the Temple at Pentecost

Acts 10 – Cornelius at Caesarea by the Sea

Acts 10 – Peter in Joppa (Jaffa)

We won’t read our text this morning until next week but I referenced it last week in a conversation and as I was preparing for today I thought it would be a good text for our pandemic lives.

TEXT

⁶And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

First: Placing the Text in Context

a) The reason for Luke’s writing

Luke wrote his Gospel and Luke to a single person:

Luke 1:1-4 - *Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, ²just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, ³it seemed good to me also, having*

followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Acts 1:1-12a - In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ²until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” ⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ⁹And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” Then....

- The Gospel of Luke is the Acts of Jesus
- The book of Acts is the Acts of the Apostles

“This is how, Luke says in the book of Acts,” we got from Jesus to you, Theophilus.”

And that is why Acts 16:1-5 is so important. It tells us how we got from the Apostles to you, Heritage.

b) Who are “They” in v 1?

16:1-5 – The ‘they’ is Paul, Silas (15:40) and Timothy

- Acts 9 - Paul, a persecutor of the church, became a Christian.
- Acts 13:1-4 – The church in Antioch of Syria, sent he and Barnabas to evangelize the Roman world. They also took Barnabas’s nephew, Mark.
- Acts 13:13 - Mark left the group
- Acts 15 - They returned with news of God’s grace to Gentiles and Paul encourages Barnabas to go on another trip
- Acts 15 - Barnabas wants to take Mark. Paul says no. So, they part ways: Barnabas takes Mark and Paul chooses Silas and that’s how Paul and Silas end up in Derbe and Lystra.

1st Map - Acts 16:1 - Derbe and Lystra

16:6-8 - And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to

go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸ So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.

2nd Map – Phrygia, Galatia, Asia, Bithynia, Mysia,

1st Map – Troas

First: Placing the Text in Context

Second: The ‘No’ Paul Faced

16:7-8 - *And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸ So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.*

This is where the sermon gets its title, “The “No’s of God.”

We each endure circumstances that are particular to us but one of the circumstances we all face is when God says, ‘no,’ and we don’t get our way about something.

God’s ‘no’s’ are a good thing.

a) Adam and Eve

Genesis 1:15-17 - *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

Genesis 3:6 - *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*

Even Better Than Eden – Nancy Guthrie

From Eden to the Jew Jerusalem – T. Desmond Alexander

b) Israel and a king

Deuteronomy 17:14 - *When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ ¹⁵ you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.*

1 Samuel 8:4-7 - *Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah ⁵ and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." ⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.*

The problem Paul faced is the problem we all face, and have from the beginning...

Genesis 3:1 - *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, Did God actually say...*

a) We doubt the wisdom of God

Genesis 3:4-5 - *But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

b) We doubt the goodness of God

Third: How God Redeems our 'No's

Acts 16:9-10 - *And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*

Map #2

But you probably know it better like this –

Map #3

The history of Paul in Macedonia is the history of the Gospel in Europe and then America

God's 'no' to Paul, was God's 'yes' to you

- Mother, what if 'no' to you, is 'yes' to your child?
- Husband, what if 'no' to you, is 'yes' to your wife?
- Friend, what if 'no' to you, is 'yes' to your friend?

After reading through the Scripture and seeing all of the times God says 'no,' about various things, can we trust God with his 'no' to us?

1 – Have no other gods is a 'yes' to the only true, real, living, helpful God.

- 2 – No graven image is a ‘yes’ to see God as he truly is.
- 3 – Don’t take the Lord’s name in vein is a ‘yes’ to the only way to a God-centered life
- 4 – Remembering the Sabbath is a ‘yes’ to appropriate work and rest both physically and spiritually
- 5 – Honor your father and mother is a ‘yes’ to healthy, lifelong relationships
- 6 – Not murdering is a ‘yes’ to personal and societal wellness
- 7 – No adultery is a ‘yes’ to freedom from stress, guilt, regret, joy
- 8 – No stealing is a ‘yes’ to healthy relationships. work, fulfilment, trusting God
- 9 – Not lying is a ‘yes’ to our identity in Christ alone
- 10 – Not coveting is a ‘yes’ to contentment, peace and happiness

God is our greatest good and his no’s are the path to ‘yes’ of wellness

If God is our greatest good, then

- Every no is a yes
- Every sorrow is sanctifying
- Every hurt is a healing
- Every heartbreak is a heart-make
- Every death is a life
- Every wrong is made right

a) Better than Eden

God’s plan for His world is not simply to restore what was lost in Eden before the Fall. The new creation we read about on the final two chapters of Revelation will be far more glorious than the creation we see in the opening chapters of Genesis.

And so it is with our lives. God redeems all of his ‘no’s, to create, not the life we want, (We laugh at “Your Best Life Now”) but the life He intends to give us.

Even Better Than Eden – Nancy Guthrie

From Eden to the Jew Jerusalem – T. Desmond Alexander

b) Better than Saul

Israel’s choice of Saul, whom God rejected, reemphasized the divine pattern that is revealed in the NT.

- Abel over Cain
- Isaac over Ishmael
- Jacob over Esau
- David over Saul

God always rejects the first birth for the second.

John 3:3 – *You must be born again*

*Born once, die twice
Born twice, die once,*

Everything is going according to God's plan.

Everything is going according to our **great, good** God's plan.

Conclusion:

Why did Luke write the book of Acts? To explain to Theophilus how the Gospel got from Jesus to Theophilus.

What does this text say? It shows how the Gospel got from Paul to you.

God's 'no' to Bithynia was God's 'yes' to Macedonia/Europe. God's 'yes' to Europe is God's 'yes' to you.

We have learned from reading through the Bible that...
Every divine 'no' is God's 'yes' to something else something better

Community Groups:

- 1 – Read the text, Acts 16:6-10
- 2 – What has been your favorite text in the book of Acts?
- 3 - Why did Luke write the book of Acts?
- 4 – What would your 'one phrase' summary be of the book of Acts?
- 5 – Do we know all of the reasons 'why' God said no to Paul going into Bithynia?
- 6 – Do we know if the Gospel ever entered Bithynia?
- 7 – What do we do / how do we respond / how should we respond, when we don't know all or any of the reasons why God says, 'no?'

8 – How do we trust God with our “Bithynias?” (when we don’t know what God could have or would have done)

9 –Using Eden and Israel as examples, what are some of the reasons why God said, ‘no’ to people?

10 – What did the serpent try to get Adam and Eve to doubt?

11 – Why do we doubt God’s wisdom or goodness?

12 – How are the Ten Commandments God’s ‘yeses’ to us?

12 – Talk about a ‘no’ from God that you later discovered was in your best interests?

13 – How is Covid-19 both a ‘no’ and a ‘yes’ to you?