

God Fixes The Times



Foundations (Day 208)
by Derek Prince

Yesterday, we read how Paul and Silas were led by the Spirit to Europe. As we now look back over nineteen subsequent centuries of Church history, we realise the decisive part played by the Church in Europe, first in preserving the truth of the gospel and then in actively disseminating that truth throughout the rest of the world. We can understand, therefore, why, in the wisdom and foreknowledge of God, it was of the utmost urgency and importance that the gospel should, thus early, be planted in Europe by Paul himself, the chief apostle to the Gentiles.

However, Paul and Silas knew nothing of the course that history would take in the next nineteen centuries. Therefore, their taking of this epoch-making step into Europe was made possible solely through the supernatural revelation and direction of the Holy Spirit. If they had not been open to the Spirit's guidance, they would have missed God's plan, both for their own lives and also for the whole work of the gospel.

God's supernatural direction of Paul through the Holy Spirit at this point is made all the more remarkable when we consider certain subsequent phases of Paul's missionary activity.

Here in Acts 16 we read that Paul was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in the province of Asia, and therefore he journeyed past Asia and on into Europe. Yet in Acts 19 we read how Paul returned some time later to Ephesus, which was the main city of the province of Asia, and how there developed out of his preaching one of the greatest and most extensive revivals ever recorded in his whole ministry.

> "And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." (Acts 19:10)

Surely this is worthy of our careful consideration. Earlier Paul had not been allowed by the Holy Spirit even to enter Asia or to speak to a single soul there. Now, returning there at God's appointed time and under the Holy Spirit's guidance, Paul witnessed such an impact through the preaching of the gospel that every single human dwelling in the entire province came to hear the testimony of Christ.

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On the basis of these facts, we may form two conclusions:

1. If Paul had entered Asia on his first visit, contrary to the Spirit's direction, he would have encountered nothing but frustration and failure.
2. By visiting Asia prematurely, before the Spirit led him there, Paul could easily have hindered, or even totally prevented, the subsequent mighty move of God's Spirit which he was privileged to witness on his later visit.

What a lesson there is here for all who seek to preach the gospel or to witness for Christ in any way! In every course of proposed activity, there are two factors of related importance which we must take into account: 1) the place, 2) the time.

In this, the revelation of Scripture anticipates the basic inclusion of the modern scientific theory of relativity: that we can never accurately specify place unless we also specify time. These two are interrelated and can never be separated.

Devotional

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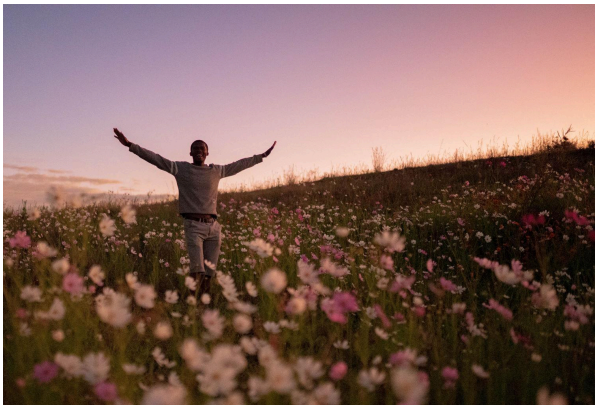

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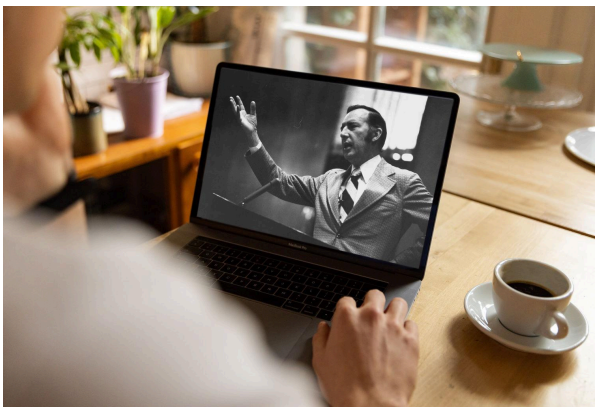

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