STUDY 3 || ACTS 15:36-16:40 & PHILIPPIANS

GOSPEL WINS

Allowing yourself to be captured by the enemy can sometimes be a worthwhile tactic to achieve a greater goal. In *Hogan's Heroes, Jack* and his fellow prisoners in Stalag 13 deliberately stayed behind bars to help others find their freedom. They knew the value of playing the long game, even if it meant serving time. The win isn't avoiding prison, it's accomplishing your ultimate goal. (Loki in *The Avengers* adopts a similar strategy.)

What inglorious 'time' have you been willing to serve in order to achieve a much more glorious end?

GOSPEL LOSSES

After some time in Antioch Paul and Barnabas become concerned for the welfare of the churches they've planted. So they plan a trip.

Both Paul and Barnabas always do their ministry *with others* - never alone. So they look for gospel partners. But past mistakes cause some tensions when it comes to picking *who* will partner in the journey.

Read Acts 15:36-41

1. Would you have taken Mark along with you, especially after Barnabas insisted?

2. Did the experience of disharmony make Paul give up on his 'doing things together' methodology? What evidence is there for this?

The 'WE' Passages

Careful readers of Acts have noticed that in some key sections the author, Luke, is travelling with Paul, as indicated by his use of the word "we." The first of the "we" passage occurrs in Acts 16:9-10. Note the sudden transition in Troas:

"During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, **we** got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

Paul, Luke and friends travel to "Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia" in Acts 16:11-12. Apparently Luke stayed on there while Paul and Silas went on, eventually settling for 18 months in Corinth.

PERSONAL TRIALS AND GOSPEL WINS

The next stage of the missionary journey sees obstacles and trials for Paul and co, but also lots of people believing the gospel. At each step, the Holy Spirit seems to be the one who gets His way, whether that's easy or hard for the people in the circumstances.

Read Acts 16

3. Keeping in mind the Jerusalem council decision in Acts 15 (last week), why do you think Paul put Timothy through the hardship of circumcision? (Is this hypocritical?)

4. What were the most important factors in working out the travel plan as they moved on from there? (Verses 6-12)

5. What were (a) the real motivations and (b) the stated motivations of the men who waylaid Paul and Silas and dragged them to the magistrates? (Verses 19-21)

6. What persuaded Paul and Silas' jailer that they had salvation to offer?

STRATEGIC MEMO - DEFINING GOSPEL WINS

For Paul, when he had the chance to go free, he preferred to stay behind for the sake of the jailer and his salvation. That seemed typical of his approach. In fact, Paul later wrote a letter back to the Philippians, ironically from another jail cell, this time in Rome.

Read Philippians 1:12-18

7. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul seems to define a win very differently to what we think of as normal! How would Paul define a win from the Philippians passage?

8. Thinking back to what Paul and Silas did while in prison, did their actions match his later words (in Acts 16:25-32)?

9. If all that matters to Paul is the progress of the gospel, why do you think he so pointedly forced the magistrates to publicly acquit him in Acts 16:35-40? (Hint: What effect might Paul's public acquittal have had for the young Philippian church?)

Different cultures around the world think of very different things as 'wins'. For example, Baby boomers and millennials may have very different definitions of what makes a good job. Or a working class man from Brisbane may have a very different definition of a good weekend to an upper class Japanese woman.

10. Take a second to think about your cultural background. What kinds of things do those influences define as a win in life?

11. How might we need to re-train our thinking in order to be more influenced by the Holy Spirit than by our culture? What possible lifestyle choices might a Christian in 21st century Brisbane make that reflect that same definition of a win?

Pray for MPC that together as a church we would partner in getting the gospel out, and that that would be our definition of a win.