

Acts chapters 15 and 16 records the beginning of the church at Philippi.

You may remember Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey to Galatia where God gave them much success in planting many churches even though they experienced a lot of persecution.

Paul wanted to go and visit the churches they started and he wanted Barnabas to accompany him again. This time, however, Barnabas wanted to take his nephew John Mark, who was with them at the beginning of their first missionary journey. But Paul doesn't want Mark to go this time because he went AWOL on their first trip, running back home.

Acts 15:39 tells us that "*the contention* (between Paul and Barnabas) *became so sharp that they parted from one another.*" So Barnabas took his nephew Mark and went in one direction and Paul took a brother named Silas and revisited the churches started by Paul in Galatia.

Luke records that Paul attempted to go south into the province of Asia (the leading city being Ephesus) but the Spirit of God prevented them. Paul and his team thought they would go north into the land where modern Turkey is today; but "*the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them*" (Acts 16:7).

He couldn't go north and he couldn't go south—since he had come from the east, the only direction he could go was *west*. Paul goes west as far as Troas (Troy) and then he had to stop because he could progress no further without taking a boat.

Paul waits for the Lord's direction and eventually God gives him a vision in Acts 16:9-10 of a man in Macedonia saying to him, "*Come over to Macedonia and help us.*"

Paul and his team board a ship and cross over into the continent of Europe and his first stop was...*Philippi*.

The vision that Paul had in Acts 16:9-10 could have been a direct response to the prayers that were regularly being prayed by the women mentioned in verse 13! God heard the prayers of these worshippers who knew the God of Abraham but did not know the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Verse 14 and 15 tells us that Paul and his associates met Lydia, a worshipper of God and the Lord opened her heart to the Gospel message and saved her!

Not long after this (if we continue reading the text) Paul comes across a slave girl who was possessed by a demon. The girl's master used her as a fortune teller and got rich from her demonically-inspired trade.

In verses 16-18 we find the demon screaming out through the girl, "*These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.*" The demon-possessed girl did this for many days until Paul got grieved in his spirit (lit. "worn out" or annoyed) and cast the demon from the girl.

This quieted her but it also cut the fortune telling profits from her masters and so they dragged Paul and Silas to the authorities who were pressured by the other greedy business holders in the town to throw them into jail.

While in jail, verse 25 says, “*at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.*” Suddenly there was an earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison and threw open the gates.

The prison guard thought that Paul and the other prisoners would escape and that would mean his life. He was about to take his sword and kill himself when Paul called out with a loud voice *saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."*

The guard asks Paul and Silas, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” Paul shares the gospel with the guard and his family and baptizes the whole bunch.

This was the beginning of the church in Philippi. Lydia and her group of God-worshipping women who prayed at the riverside every Sabbath; a young girl who was formerly demon-possessed but now gloriously saved and a prison guard who was about to kill himself who was now saved along with his entire household!

Now Paul is back in prison—this time he is in Rome being held under house arrest by Caesar himself. The Philippian church has been sending money to help support Paul and with the last offering comes a letter saying that they fear that Paul’s imprisonment has hindered the advancement of the Gospel.

So Paul responds in beginning at verse 12:

Phil 1:12 “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel...”

What “things” is Paul referring to? Paul is referring to his present distress from preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But this isn’t the first time Paul has experienced hardship related to preaching the Gospel.

2 Cor 11:23 Are they ministers of Christ?; I speak as a fool; I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

2 Cor 11:24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

2 Cor 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

2 Cor 11:26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

2 Cor 11:27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness;

2 Cor 11:28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

Epaphroditus, a fellow-servant of Jesus Christ, and probably the pastor of the Philippian church, had been sent to give Paul an offering of support and to relay their concerns that his imprisonment was hindering or curtailing his mission work.

Paul uses the first part of this letter to assure them that the opposite of their reasoning has been the case. His circumstances have actually resulted in the advancement of the Gospel.

Phil 1:12 “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel...”

In verse 12 Paul uses the expression, “*the things which happened to me...*” The words, “*which happened*” are not in the original text so Paul is referring to just “*the things*” or circumstances that took place in his life.

We all have “*things*” in our lives and Paul is telling us here that the “*things*” in his life advanced the Gospel rather than hindered it.

Nothing just ever happens to the believer. “*Things...*” or our “*trials and tribulations*” either come directly from God or they arrive from some other source and are channeled to us by His permissive will.

We know this from Luke chapter 4 where it was God, the Holy Spirit that led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. God Himself doesn’t tempt us but He allows the circumstances of life to test us so that we might learn what we are made of.

Paul says in Romans 8:28, “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*”

In other words (paraphrasing the words to a song by the Isley Brothers) ... “*It’s God’s thing, and He’s going to do what’s He got to do/You and I can’t tell Him, who to sock it to.*”

It’s God’s thing that He makes our thing so that He might use that thing to make us more like His Son, Jesus Christ.

We all have *things* in our lives and God works all these *things* together for good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose.

Paul says that the “*things*” he was experiencing, the things that the Philippian believers thought hindered the advancement of the Gospel, were actually furthering it.

The word “*furtherance*” or “*advancement*” or “*progress*” comes from a Greek word that means “*to cut before*” and according to Wuest, is thought to have been used of an army of pioneer wood cutters which preceded the regular army, cutting a road through an impenetrable forest, thus making possible for the army to advance into regions where otherwise it could not have gone.

This is the way we need to look at our trials. Remember the words of James, “*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*” (James 1)

When God allows trials to come our way, He has a larger purpose in mind above and beyond the pain and suffering we sometimes go through. He wants us to learn something and He wants to accomplish something greater than ourselves in our lives.

How many times have you been able to comfort someone with the comfort that you have been comforted by God? (2 Corinthians). How often have you been able to emphasize with someone in their distress because you yourself have been through something similar?

Paul was in a trial and he's not fretting; rather he's rejoicing. Evidently he had asked God for wisdom and God gave it to him—he knew the reason for his trial—he saw the bigger picture and shares it to his readers in verse 13 and 14:

Phil 1:13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

Phil 1:14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

This is big; this is huge! Paul was imprisoned in Rome; he was under house arrest—living in a rented house. He was Caesar's prisoner awaiting his trial that was to occur in the Roman imperial court.

Paul says in verse 13 that "*it has become evident*" or "*it has become clear (NIV)*" or "*it has become manifest (KJV)*" to the whole palace guard and to all the rest, that his chains are "*in Christ.*"

The word on the street and throughout Rome was that Caesar had a preacher arrested and the question was, "Why was he arrested?" and "Why was he in prison?"

The answer to those questions was: "He was in prison because he was connected to and preaching about Christ!" The next obvious question was, "*And who is Christ?*"

Paul testified about who Christ was so that everywhere in Rome, from the city streets to the palace of Caesar himself would come to know that Paul was in prison because he preached the good news that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose from the grave.

Paul's captive audience...

Paul was under house arrest and had a soldier assigned to guard him—but it wasn't any old soldier—it was a soldier from the praetorian—one of the soldiers that served in the palace, most likely, as a bodyguard to Caesar himself. Today we may call them the CIA or the elite of our military like the Special Forces Unit (the Green Beret).

The Praetorian Guard was, like most guard units, on a rotating assignment and Paul was able to share Christ with someone who had his undivided attention! Every four hours a new guard was brought in and *chained* to Paul.

Acts 28:16 says, "*Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.*"

I imagine the first time a guard has been given the assignment to guard Paul. He arrives at the house expecting some heinous criminal figure and finds an old man, hunched back, bent over with his eyes oozing fluid.

The guard immediately begins to pity Paul and the apostle Paul begins to smile and the joy of the Lord comes through like the rays of the sun taking over an overcast day. He begins to tell one guard after another that he is a "prisoner of Jesus Christ."

Everyday, they hear this apostle of Jesus Christ speaking to his Lord in prayer. They would hear the conversations Paul had with those who visited him. Paul would undoubtedly talk with his captors about their soul's need for salvation.

For two years they would witness him dictating his letters...what we have come to know as the *prison epistles*...Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon.

In Philippians 4:22 Paul is closing his letter and writes, *"All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household."* Evidently, some of Caesar's own family members had gotten saved. Paul had members of royalty chained to him!

The 2nd century Christian author Tertullian wrote that the Roman government became disturbed when it was discovered that Christians were in positions of authority. Many of these men later died for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul tells the concerned Philippians that on the contrary, his imprisonment has turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel. He says, *"But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."*

Paul had the proper perspective when it came to his trial the sufferings he endured. The reason why many Christians do not open their mouths and proclaim Christ is because they know that there will be consequences.

We've been learning in our LIFE Group Bible study that one of the reasons Christians do not share their faith in Christ is the fear of rejection. Many Christians are afraid they will be rejected if they come out of the closet and unashamedly proclaim Jesus as the only Lord and Savior.

But Jesus tells us to expect it. If they persecuted Him they will most surely treat His followers the same:

*John 15:20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.
John 15:21 "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.*

Mat 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

Mat 5:12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Jesus says that you will be persecuted when you identify yourself with Him but there is a reward that is given to the follower of Jesus Christ who is reviled and persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Paul was thrown in jail because of his witness; he was thrown in prison because of his testimony of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Paul lets us know in verses 13 and 14 that because of his chains in Christ many were encouraged in their faith and were *"much more bold to speak the word without fear."*

Years ago before I was a pastor, I was a member of a church that would gather together a group of people who had a heart to knock on doors and share the Gospel with the community. The group would be

divided into two teams; one would hit the streets and the other would hang back at the church for the purpose of prayer.

After about an hour or so, the first team would return to the church and a few of its members would share how the Lord used them.

We heard stories about how someone answered their door ready to hear the liberating Gospel of truth or other accounts of how some were treated harshly by the person answering their door but could rejoice because they were used by the Lord.

This would pump up the group that stayed behind to pray because now it was their turn to hit the streets. The team that hit the streets first would be excited that it was their turn to pray, seeing how the Lord empowered them when they went out.

Paul said his chains were in Christ and his situation had become evident to the whole palace guard. Because he was imprisoned for speaking up about Christ, the church gained confidence to speak the Word of God without fear.

I said at the beginning of this message that some in the Philippian church were concerned that Paul's his opposite was happening—his imprisonment emboldened the brethren to open up about Christ.

In those days, there was a mounting antagonism toward Christians and Christianity. For one to profess Christ in Rome required boldness and a loss of love for one's own life. This is illustrated by some graffiti that was discovered by archeologists.



The **Alexamenos graffito** (also known as the *graffito blasfemo*) is an inscription carved in plaster on a wall near the Palatine Hill in Rome. It is now on display in a museum. It is among the earliest known pictorial representations of the Crucifixion of Jesus.



The image depicts a human-like figure attached to a cross and possessing the head of a donkey. To the left of the image is a young man, apparently intended to represent Alexamenos, raising one hand in a gesture suggesting

worship. Beneath the cross there is a caption written in crude Greek: "*Alexamenos worships [his] God*".

Paul was rejoicing that God was raising up believers who were encouraged in their faith and were "*much more bold to speak the word without fear*."

But then there was another concern that Paul had to address in his letter to the church at Philippi. Since Paul was in prison and not able to travel back to Philippi, there were some who appointed themselves to take Paul's place.

There were some who said that "God called them..." Some even took on the reigns of leadership just to drive a stake in Paul's spirit—knowing that he was in prison, knowing that he couldn't do much about their advances into his slot.

Then there were those who perhaps out of love for the Apostle, stood in the gap for him. They knew his heart longed to be with those who had come to know the Lord under his ministry.

Remember, Paul was there at the beginning of the church in Philippi. There was Lydia and her group of God-worshipping women who prayed at the riverside every Sabbath; a young girl who was formerly demon-possessed but now gloriously saved and a prison guard who was about to kill himself who was now saved along with his entire household.

Paul longed to be with these people and perhaps there were those who tried to continue where Paul left off. They became a surrogate for Paul—they did it out of love.

Paul is compelled to address these circumstances:

Phil 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will:

Phil 1:16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

Phil 1:17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

Phil 1:18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

Paul was concerned that Christ would be preached. To help us understand Paul's passion to see people saved need to put the need to "preach Christ" in perspective.

- World Population: 6.7 billion people.
- There are 238 political countries in the world. 193 Independent Countries.
- Approximately 11% of the population confess to be born again Christians. Another 20% attend church but may not profess to be Christian.
- Around 36% of the world's population has opportunity to hear the gospel but remain unevangelized despite the prevalence of churches in their region.
- That leaves 32% of the world's population that has no opportunity to hear the Gospel. Many of these have never even heard of the name of Jesus.
- Death Rate: 57.9 million people die each year
- 158,857 people die each day with approximately 66,000 people die each day having had no access to the Gospel
- 6619 people die each hour
- 110 people die each minute
- Approximately 1.64 people die each second.¹

- North America is the ONLY continent where Christianity is NOT growing.
- The percentage of Christians in the U.S. dropped 9% from 1991 to 2001. The number of unchurched has almost doubled from 1991 to 2004.
- No county in America has a greater percentage of church members today than a decade ago.
- Half of all churches last year did not add one new member through "conversion growth".
- In 1900, there were 28 churches for every 10,000 Americans.
- In 1950, there were 17 churches for every 10,000 Americans.
- In 2000, there were 12 churches for every 10,000 Americans.

¹ <http://oneworldmissions.com/site.cfm?PageID=5521>

- In 2004, there were 11 churches for every 10,000 Americans.
- (1 church per 909 people)

Some may be thinking: “*Don’t we find in many neighborhoods a church on every corner?*” “*I hear about new churches starting all the time...*”

- We lose 72 churches per week or 10.27 per day.
- We gain 24 churches per week or 3.42 per day.
- That’s a net loss of 48 churches per week or 6.85 per day.

There is a need to start new churches today so that Christ may be preached.

We are living in a time when more and more churches are started in unbiblical ways: Church splits; women pastors and preachers; self-appointed preachers; leaders who are not ordained by God and confirmed by the laying on of hands; church leaders who are in the ministry with improper motives---money, prestige, sensuality...What would Paul say?

While he wouldn’t condone any of the ways a church or ministry gets started, he would say:

*Phil 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will:
Phil 1:16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;
Phil 1:17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.
Phil 1:18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.*

I believe that Paul is not only addressing the corporate means, or the church when it comes to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, but the individual who preaches Christ.

There were obviously some who did not open their mouths because they believed that they could not match the oratory skills and the depth of teaching that Paul demonstrated each time he preached.

When Paul was imprisoned, they probably reasoned to themselves, “*Man! Paul is in prison! Who’s going to give the Word out now! I know I can’t do it like he did but with God’s grace, I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me!*”

Bill Fay, the author of our current LIFE Group study book, *Share Jesus Without Fear*, says that you can be a stuttering, bumbling witness but if you are being obedient to the mandate of Christ and sharing the Gospel, that’s what’s important.

Fay says that too many Christian’s are guilty of the “sin of silence.” He says, “Many Christians tell people they love the Lord. They offer hugs and tell people they’ll pray for them, yet they only share hints of the Gospel truth. Sometimes they put those silver fish and “Honk If You Love Jesus” bumper stickers on the back of their cars. And if they are made of braver stuff, they go to football games and hold up posters with the words, “John 3:16” painted in large red letters.”

Fay goes on to say that “These Christians don’t share enough information to allow the Holy Spirit to effect a heart change. They fail to tell their friends how to go from the state of death to the state of life!”

This seems to be Paul's concern. It didn't matter to Paul how Christ was preached, just as long as He was preached.

So when was the last time you sat down with someone and opened up the Scripture and shared with them the Word of God about how to be saved? Even if the person doesn't trust Christ in that sitting, you have still been obedient to the Gospel; you've preached Christ!

Stories...

A Christian man owned a barber shop. One night, at a revival meeting, the barber felt greatly burdened to do more with his testimony for Christ. The next evening, the barber began attending a "Soul Winner's Class" at his church. He attended faithfully every night for two weeks. He rehearsed all the material, took extensive notes, and memorized the assigned Bible verses.

At the end of the two weeks he received a plaque acknowledging his completion of the course. The next morning, in the barber shop, he hung the plaque and bowed his head. "Dear Lord," he prayed, "help me to witness to the first man to come through that door this morning." At that moment in walked the biggest, meanest, foulest man the barber had ever seen. It seems this man had recently lost a bet with some "biker" buddies and now he had to get his head shaved.

Needless to say, the barber did not feel very comfortable quoting the "Roman Road" to a man with a tattoo on his neck. The rest of the day didn't go any better for the barber. At 5:00 p.m., the barber was sobbing with shame. He had not witnessed to a single person. He bowed his head again. This time he prayed, "Lord, if you will allow one more opportunity, I promise I will do my part." At that, the door opened and in walked a pleasant looking gentleman. The man smiled at the barber, apologized for coming in so late and took a seat in the chair.

As the barber draped the man in his protective sheet, he began to try to remember what he was supposed to say. He began to get very confused. As the barber put shaving cream on the man's face, he tried to remember the answers he had learned to the possible objections. As the barber began to sharpen his razor, he realized that he simply could not remember a thing he had learned. This made the barber very nervous and soon sweat began to break out on his forehead. Finally, in desperation, he shook the razor at the man and screamed, "ARE YOU PREPARED TO DIE??!!!"

The story doesn't say whether the barber was successful in sharing his faith but what I do know is that the Bible says in Isaiah 55:11 *"that God's Word will not return to Him void, but it shall accomplish what pleases Him, And it shall prosper in the thing for which He sent it."*

God wants to use you as His witness to share the liberating truth of His Word to people who are lost and destined to spend eternity in Hell.

Already God is moving some at GraceWay Church to break out of their comfort zones, to cast off their security blankets and share their faith.

Don't view yourself as the one who has to lead the person across the finish line—view yourself as "a sower of seed" or someone who comes along to water what others have planted.

1 Cor 3:6-9a *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase."*

Paul says that it is *“God who gives the increase.”* Someone has once said, *“God doesn't want our ability, He wants our availability.”*

There was an Austrian missionary team that traveled to Frankfurt, Germany to do outreach. They drove to what they viewed as a particularly lousy location. People were streaming past, it was lunchtime and they could see that NO-ONE was going to stop and listen. But they were there, and had set up their stuff, and had to stay and do it.

They did their worship song - no-one stopped...their skit, no-one stopped, and then it was time for the speaker to give a short message with the Gospel. He decided to give it his all, reasoning to himself, “It’s for God,” even though he couldn’t see anyone stopping. He preached my heart out and...no-one listened.

He thought to himself as he finished, “What a waste of time that was!”

They had a station with a sign that said, “What does Jesus mean for you?” Sometimes people would stop to write something and then they could talk to them. He thought he would walk over to that station to see if anyone wrote anything down.

Just as soon as had he gotten over there, a woman came hurrying along, looked at the sign and stopped, saying, “So what are you? Hindus? Buddhists? What?”

“No”, he said, “We're Christians," and started to talk but she cut him off.

"So you believe in Jesus do you?"

"Yes we believe Jesus is the Son of God ..." she cut him off again.

"Because I'd like to ask Jesus in my life. Can you help me with that."

At this point he looked at her closely to see if she was one of the other team members having a little fun with him.) But no, she was genuine. He prayed with her, she accepted Christ with tears in her eyes, then hurried off and he never saw her again.

So God showed this missionary that *He’s* the one who gives the increase—He just wants our availability and our faithfulness.

Paul goes on to writes in 1 Corinthians 3, *“Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers...”*

Did you hear that, “We are God’s fellow workers.” We all labor together, with God when it comes to reaching people with the Gospel.

I found another true story of missionaries reaching out with the Gospel. This was a team of German believers in Nepali. The person who told the story, never personally lead a soul to pray the “Sinner’s Prayer” to trust Jesus Christ. But this doesn’t mean that God has never used her to bring people to Him.

My outreach in Nepal was absolutely wonderful. My team saw over 80 converts, but not a single one of them was converted by me. That was something that would often bring me down.

I thought that I was useless to my team because I never talked to someone and had them get saved.

However, several things happened to keep me encouraged. The one that truly made it clear to me that I was still being used by God happened in a small village in the district of Chitwan in Nepal. My team all went out (on a 3 hour ride in a tempo, if you've been to Nepal, you understand) and we did our program, which included worship and a drama.

I played an interesting character in the drama, so I usually got a little attention for it afterwards. But this village was different. Instead of a little attention, I got a lot of attention. All I was doing was sitting there, and people just started to gather around me.

It started off with some kids, and I kinda talked to them (using all 2 of my Nepali sentences). The crowd kept growing around me and I had no translator. So, I stood up and yelled for one. Instead, a guy on my team came over. Of all the people on the outreach team, the 2 of us were the least Nepali. He's about 6'5" and has bright red curly hair; I have blond hair and blue eyes and the brightest skin ever witnessed (the Nepalis often said I resemble a baby doll). So, when he came over, it attracted the attention of just about every other person who was there and they came over to us.

Well, that was all that happened. No translator came, I didn't preach, nobody was healed or even prayed for by me. What I didn't know, though, was that a woman on my team was talking to a group of people. There were 5 young girls in that group who were very interested, but were insecure because of all the other people around them.

At the exact moment when the woman invited that group to trust in Jesus, I stood up and called for the translator, drawing a big crowd. In fact, it drew the entire crowd away, except those 5 young girls.

They all gave their lives to Jesus right then, and I learned that you don't necessarily have to be center-stage to be used mightily by God. He works in mysterious ways, and just because I've never led someone in the sinner's prayer doesn't mean that I haven't led someone to Christ.

This is what it is all about—just being available to be used by God no matter how He wants to use us.

You don't have to be perfect at it, you can trip over every other word as you try to share the Gospel. What matters is that God will give the increase.

Out text tells us that Paul wasn't even concerned about the motives in giving the Gospel, just as long as Christ was preached.

This week we are hosting our Vacation Bible School. This is the first time that we will not be having 35-40 missionaries assist us with this project. BUT, we have the Lord!

Throughout the Bible we find examples of where God assured His people that it is *“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, Says the LORD of hosts.”* (Zec. 4:6). God tells us in his Word that *“A few with God is stronger than an army without Him”* and *“Numbers don't matter much where there is trust and the anointing of God.”*