

A WHOLE You in God! Part 6 - June 25, 2010

Praise the Lord and Greetings to Everyone!

We have one more part remaining before we end this particular Encouragement Series. I want to thank each of you who have shared with me how encouraging this series has been to you. I thank God for His faithfulness to continue to use me and this ministry to be a blessing right where I am.

God has led me to share a few explicit experiences that will encourage us, strengthen us and let us know that we are where we are supposed to be in Him regardless of how uncomfortable it may be. He simply wants us to place ourselves in His capable care to navigate us through to the other side. Praise the Lord!

Experience #1: Biblical Breakup, Paul and Barnabas Separate [Acts 15:36-41, NLT]

[36] After some time Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are doing." [37] Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. [38] But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in their work. [39] Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus. [40] Paul chose Silas, and as he left, the believers entrusted him to the Lord's gracious care. [41] Then he traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches there. Wow!

The King James Study Bible stated that 'both **Paul** and **Barnabas** were spiritual men; both are described as full of the Holy Spirit. Yet they disagreed and made mistakes. Luke [the author of Acts] implies that Paul's decision was less emotional (**thought** and **chose** rather than **determined**) and does state that he was **recommended** or commended (Gr. *paradothesis*) **by the brethren**. **Silas** was a good choice being (1) a prophet (v.32); (2) one of the two commissioned by the Jerusalem church to proclaim the decree of the council (v.22); and (3) a Roman citizen (16:37).' **Acts 13:[13]** *Paul and his companions then left Paphos by ship for Pamphylia, landing at the port town of Perga. There John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem.* Further the King James Study Bible stated that 'whether or not **Saul** changed his name to **Paul** due to his prominent convert Sergius Paulus, Luke at least uses this opportunity to change his name to Paul. Also, this is the point at which Paul takes the reins of leadership. The former designation had always been Barnabas and Saul; now it becomes **Paul and his company**. This as much as anything may have prompted Barnabas's relative, **John Mark** (Col.4:10), to abort the mission and return home to Jerusalem (**Acts 12:12**).' Does this not happen to many of us today?

Friends, this is why reading and studying the Word of God is paramount. Some Christians will try to unfortunately make you feel guilty for not being in relationship with them. If you study the text further, God will give you all kinds of revelations about jealousy, envy, strife between believers when God Himself elevates us for His purpose and plan, not for our own benefit, but for that which will bring glory and honor to God. Unfortunately, we're so deep sometimes that we miss the blessing and possibly a very good relationship altogether because we didn't understand that God's plans are higher than ours. Glory to God! I pray

you study this and let this be a lesson and not allow the enemy to come in and tear us apart when God simply may redirect our plans from what He may have shown us. We can work together in different places in the vineyard without being mad at each other. Help us Jesus!

Example #2: Paul and Silas Arrested and Released; Lydia is Baptized, [Acts 16:11-40, NLT]

My Friends, this is a very familiar passage of scripture and too lengthy to share all of it but do you remember why Paul and Silas were arrested in the first place? Glory to God!

Verses 13-15 describe how Paul and Silas were seeking to find people praying so they could share the gospel. They met Lydia, a seller of purple. Paul shared the gospel. She believed and was baptized including members of her household. She begged them to come and stay with them and they did. I shared this because here God saved a woman and her household, now look what happens. You know the devil is mad at them.

[16] One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a demon-possessed slave girl. She was a fortune-teller who earned a lot of money for her masters. [17] She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved." [18] This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And instantly it left her. [19] Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. [20] "The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!" they shouted to the city officials. [21] "They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice."

Paul and Silas were beat and thrown into jail because the masters who were making money off this fortune-teller, demon-possessed slave girl, had been delivered. The demon spirit however kept picking on Paul until he had no other choice but to speak to that demon to come out of her in the name of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah! So her masters lost their money and girl! Glory to God! There is so much here! So, they were angry and got the whole city in an uproar telling lies on Paul and Silas. That's what this jail imprisonment started about, but it was only a set-up for God to do something even greater. Stay with me ya'll! Just read this. I don't even have to add anything to it...

[24] So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks. [25] Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. [26] Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! [27] The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. [28] But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!" [29] The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. [30] Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" [31] They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." [32] And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. [33] Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his

household were immediately baptized. [34] He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God. Come on somebody! How can you sit down on something as glorious as this?! Hallelujah! My Friends, check out super bad Apostle Paul here....

[35] The next morning the city officials sent the police to tell the jailer, "Let those men go!" [36] So the jailer told Paul, "The city officials have said you and Silas are free to leave. Go in peace." [37] But Paul replied, "They have publicly beaten us without a trial and put us in prison—and we are Roman citizens. So now they want us to leave secretly? Certainly not! Let them come themselves to release us!" [38] When the police reported this, the city officials were alarmed to learn that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. [39] So they came to the jail and apologized to them. Then they brought them out and begged them to leave the city. [40] When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they met with the believers and encouraged them once more. Then they left town. I encourage you as I encourage myself to continue to follow God's leading no matter where it takes us. We never know who is waiting to hear and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Good News, to receive salvation and start their progressive sanctification journey. Glory to God!

This is the last example. Please read intently because God allowed Paul to be lied on, a set-up, to be used for God's glory before kings. The scripture says *they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony*. Again, I encourage you as I encourage myself, we just don't know where God will take us if we obey Him. Glory to God!

Example #3: Paul's defense before King Agrippa [Acts 26: 1-32]

[1] Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You may speak in your defense." So Paul, gesturing with his hand, started his defense:

[2] "I am fortunate, King Agrippa, that you are the one hearing my defense today against all these accusations made by the Jewish leaders, [3] for I know you are an expert on all Jewish customs and controversies. Now please listen to me patiently!

[4] "As the Jewish leaders are well aware, I was given a thorough Jewish training from my earliest childhood among my own people and in Jerusalem. [5] If they would admit it, they know that I have been a member of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of our religion. [6] Now I am on trial because of my hope in the fulfillment of God's promise made to our ancestors. [7] In fact, that is why the twelve tribes of Israel zealously worship God night and day, and they share the same hope I have. Yet, Your Majesty, they accuse me for having this hope! [8] Why does it seem incredible to any of you that God can raise the dead?

[9] "I used to believe that I ought to do everything I could to oppose the very name of Jesus the Nazarene. [10] Indeed, I did just that in Jerusalem. Authorized by the leading priests, I caused many believers there to be sent to prison. And I cast my vote against them when they were condemned to death. [11] Many times I had them punished in the

synagogues to get them to curse Jesus. I was so violently opposed to them that I even chased them down in foreign cities.

[12] *"One day I was on such a mission to Damascus, armed with the authority and commission of the leading priests. [13] About noon, Your Majesty, as I was on the road, a light from heaven brighter than the sun shone down on me and my companions. [14] We all fell down, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is useless for you to fight against my will.' [15] "Who are you, lord?" I asked. "And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. [16] Now get to your feet! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and witness. You are to tell the world what you have seen and what I will show you in the future. [17] And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles [18] to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me.'*

[19] *"And so, King Agrippa, I obeyed that vision from heaven. [20] I preached first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that all must repent of their sins and turn to God—and prove they have changed by the good things they do. [21] Some Jews arrested me in the Temple for preaching this, and they tried to kill me. [22] But God has protected me right up to this present time so I can testify to everyone, from the least to the greatest. I teach nothing except what the prophets and Moses said would happen—[23] that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, and in this way announce God's light to Jews and Gentiles alike."*

[24] *Suddenly, Festus shouted, "Paul, you are insane. Too much study has made you crazy!" [25] But Paul replied, "I am not insane, Most Excellent Festus. What I am saying is the sober truth.*

[26] *And King Agrippa knows about these things. I speak boldly, for I am sure these events are all familiar to him, for they were not done in a corner! [27] King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do—" [28] Agrippa interrupted him. "Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian so quickly?" [29] Paul replied, "Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains."*

[30] *Then the king, the governor, Bernice, and all the others stood and left. [31] As they went out, they talked it over and agreed, "This man hasn't done anything to deserve death or imprisonment." [32] And Agrippa said to Festus, "He could have been set free if he hadn't appealed to Caesar."*

Hallelujah!

God bless each of you until the next time,

Pastor Andra