"DON'T GET IN GOD'S WAY!"

ACTS 11:1-26
8-2-2026

*** Beware that you don't get in God's way! (v. 17b)**

Realize three truths:

I. YOUR WAYS ARE NOT ALWAYS GOD'S WAYS (v. 1-18)
(We need God to teach us, so that we might know His way)

In order for God to teach us:
A. WE MUST BE WILLING TO ADMIT THAT OUR IDEAS ARE SOMETIMES WRONG (v. 1-3)

In order for God to teach us:
B. WE MUST BE WILLING TO ALLOW GOD TO CHANGE OUR THINKING (v. 4-18)

II. IF GOD CANNOT USE YOU, HE WILL USE SOMEBODY ELSE (v. 19-21)
(We need God to use us, so that we might show His way)

III. GOD WANTS YOU TO BE SENSITIVE TO HIS LEADING (v. 22-26)
(We need God to lead us, so that we might go His way)

Such sensitivity to God's leading requires:

A. PERSONAL GODLINESS

B. SPIRIT CONTROL

C. EYES OF FAITH

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INTRODUCTION:

ILLUS: of playing defensive end in an alumni football game at Pillsbury and coming head-on with a giant, experienced fullback. I figured rather than going around him, I would go through him. Well, it didn't work that way. When we collided, he didn't move an inch; I was the one to go flying down to the ground. I learned an important lesson that day: "It didn't pay to get in his way."

READ Verse 17.

"Withstand" = to hinder, prevent, keep back, or forbid.

God can prevent us from going the way we think best (Acts 16:6 - "forbidden of the Holy Ghost..."), but we can never prevent Him from doing His sovereign will.

Ultimately, no one hinders God's sovereign will. (God's plan will be fulfilled right down to every detail -- EX: Judas Iscariot)

Practically, some do hinder God's moral will for their lives.

God's will is God's Word. Everytime we either intentionally or unintentionally disobey His Word, we are forbidding His will to be done in our lives.

Sometimes even with good intentions (right motives to please God), we are actually doing more harm than good.

EX: Saul (Paul) before salvation (cp. Jn. 16:2 with Acts 26:9 and I Tim. 1:13)

EX: Apollos before instructed by Aquilla & Priscilla (Acts 18:23-28)

Sometimes we are guilty of (unknowingly) hindering the work of God, so therefore we must:

*** Beware that you don't get in God's way! (v. 17b)**

Realize three truths:

I. YOUR WAYS ARE NOT ALWAYS GOD'S WAYS (v. 1-18)
(We need God to teach us, so that we might know His way)

Isaiah 55:8-9 - "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

In order for God to teach us:

A. WE MUST BE WILLING TO <u>ADMIT THAT OUR IDEAS ARE SOMETIMES WRONG</u> (v. 1-3)

V. 2
"Contended" = to dispute, or criticize, to take issue with

The imperfect tense implies a nagging or relentless desire to prove their point.

They really thought they were right, and Peter was wrong.

The legalist (one who adds laws to God's will) always thinks he's right.

V. 2-3
These people were not unsaved, lost, blind sinners. They were saved, born-again, baptized by the Holy Spirit, Jewish believers.

--And yet they were dead wrong! They did not fully realize God's new program (His saving of Gentiles on an equal level with the Jews.

Do you ever admit you're wrong? It goes against our pride.

Be open to see your errors and misunderstandings.

"There is a way that <u>seemeth right</u> unto a man . . ."

In order for God to teach us:

B. WE MUST BE WILLING TO <u>ALLOW GOD TO CHANGE OUR THINKING</u> (v. 4-18)

Summarize Peter's testimony.

After the Christian Jews heard Peter's testimony (v. 4-17):

1) They quieted down - "held their peace"
2) They praised God - "glorified"
3) They accepted God's will - they changed their way of thinking and accepted the new truth they had learned.

What is your authority? Is what you <u>think</u> your authority, or is it really God's Word?

I have a set of beliefs (standards and convictions that I base on my understanding of Scripture). However, I hope I have matured to the point that I realize that I am human, finite, limited in knowledge, etc.

Therefore, if I learn something from the Bible that goes totally against what I was taught or formerly believed, I will change my conviction.

NOTE: Always be willing to change your convictions only if a clear re-understanding of Scripture teaches you to do so.

The Bereans searched the Scriptures! (Acts 17:11) Their authority was not Paul. They had Bible convictions, not their mom's, dad's or preacher's set of convictions.

II. IF GOD CANNOT USE YOU, HE WILL USE SOMEBODY ELSE (v. 19-21)

(We need God to use us, so that we might show His way)

V. 19

God used the persecution that began over Stephen to spread the Church away from Israel, so that the gospel might reach the Gentiles (Acts 8:1, 4).

However, instead the Jewish believers (in ignorance of God's will) only sought out their own people. God did not want a "Jewish church" He wanted to fulfill His "mystery" of Jew and Gentile being one - in one body (SEE Eph. 3:1-8)

"Phenice" = Phoenicia (modern Lebanon)

"Cyprus" = an island. The home of Barnabus (4:36)

"Antioch" = the capital of Syria.

If God wanted a Jewish Church, He no doubt would have let the headquarters for Christianity stay at Jerusalem. Instead, God replaced Jerusalem with Antioch, which became the #1 Christian city, and the first center for foreign missions (6:5, 13:1, 14:26, 15:35; 18:22) (NOTE: It was also at Antioch where believers were first called "Christians" (v. 26)

We can't accuse these Jews of being outright defiant against God's will. They simply were not taught; they were ignorant of Christ's Great Commission (Mt. 28:19ff; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8); and possibly they were a bit stubborn and legalistic.

V. 20

"And" = but (de) showing a contrast. While the Jewish believers went only to their own people with the Gospel, the Cyprus and Cyrene Jewish believers went to the Gentiles.

(NOTE: Some manuscripts say "hellenists" which were Grecian Jews [ex. 6:1]; however, the contrast in context would indicate that they went to the Greek Gentiles).

Because the Jews from Judea refused to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles, God used the Jews from the foreign lands of Cyprus and Cyrene (cp. Acts 2:10), who were not so nationalistic and prejudiced, to spread God's Word to the Gentiles.

Why did God need a 13th Apostle? Why did He need Paul?

ANSWER: Because He needed someone who would be devoted to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:1-10).

God has a job to get done, and He wants you to get involved! But if you don't, God's resources are not depleted. Not one of us is irreplaceable. If God replaced Moses with Joshua, He can replace anyone of us.

Just as there are "plenty of fish in the sea," there are still plenty of willing servants that God can use. And even if there were none, God will save someone (like He did Paul) and use him/her.

I want to be used by God! I don't want to be rendered useless (put on the shelf).

Don't stand in God's way! If you do, He may need to go around you and use someone else!

V. 21

God's blessings are with those that are doing His will. We should want God's hand to be with us in the work, rather than God's hand after us to correct us.

When we don't learn what God has for us to do, God must take the time to teach us over and over lessons we should have learned long ago.

The time God has to spend spanking us, we could have used to be working for eternal treasures.

III. GOD WANTS YOU TO BE SENSITIVE TO HIS LEADING (v. 22-26)

(We need God to lead us, so that we might go His way)

Whereas: Verses 1-3 revealed to us an example of ignorance on the part of Jewish Christians; and verses 20-21 revealed an example of willingness on the part of some Cyprus and Cyrene believers, now: Verses 22-26 reveal to us an example of tenderness on the part of Barnabas.

Barnabas was sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading:

1) When he sold his land and gave the money to the Christians in need

2) When he took Paul under his wing

3) When he believed that John Mark would be faithful after having defected for a time

4) and now when he went to Antioch and encouraged the saints.

Such sensitivity to God's leading requires:

A. PERSONAL GODLINESS

Jesus said, "There is none good but God." Any true goodness that we have is God's goodness flowing through us.

We are "channels only" - but we must be clean channels.

Sin always makes us insensitive to God's leading. Sin always makes us deaf to God's speaking to us. Ja. 1:21 - "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." ("filthiness" = used of built-up ear wax)

God still speaks today in a "still small voice" (I Ki. 19:12). We must have sin out of our lives so our ears will hear Him.

Sometimes we are so set in our ways that we are determined to stay in our rut (one-track) even if it is heading in the wrong direction!

God does not lead stubborn mules! He won't guide a ship with a rusted rudder. We must allow the oil of the Holy Spirit to be applied first! Then we will be tender and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's promptings like Barnabas was.

Such sensitivity to God's leading requires:

B. SPIRIT CONTROL

V. 24

The fullness of the Spirit and faith always go together. You won't have one without the other (EX: Stephen - Acts 6:5 - "Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."

C. EYES OF FAITH

Barnabas was very tender-hearted when it came to God's working in people. He believed in John Mark; he believed in Paul (Acts 9:26-27).

"Love believeth all things" (I Cor. 13) - it believes the best about people.

CONCLUSION:

We are standing in God's way when:

1. Our ways don't match God's way
2. God has to use someone else to do what we won't do.
3. We are out of step with the Holy Spirit.

Some stand in God's way by:

1. Rebellion (won't allow Him to do His will in their life)
2. Pride (won't admit wrong)
3. Indifference (use God's blessings, but don't invest anything yourself - you become an annoyance to God's work)

God may plan to save your family, bless our church, etc., but you are standing in the way (EX: Achan withheld the blessing of God from Israel - sin in camp).

God may plan to use you in a way you never imagined - let Him have His way!

It's time that we got out of God's way and let Him teach us, use us, and lead us, rather than leaning on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5-6) and doing His work in the flesh.

INVITATION SONG - "A Tender Heart"