

How to Walk in God's Will (Part 2)

by Bayless Conley

Copyright © Answers with Bayless Conley

Hello, friend. We are sharing a story from Acts 16. If you were with us last time, we got into this story where Paul and Silas, and actually Luke was with them as well, were trying to bring the gospel into Asia. The Holy Spirit forbid them to go there. They tried to go to Bithynia. The Holy Spirit wouldn't permit them to do it. Then, Paul has a vision of a man in Macedonia in the night saying, "Come to Macedonia and help us." And they immediately gathered that the Lord was sending them to Macedonia to preach the gospel to them. That's the best help that we can give people. Eternal help by bringing the gospel to them. There is no more important work in all of the world than sharing the gospel with lost humanity. So, they go and end up in the city of Philippi. It has been this divine summons by God who sent them there. And you would have thought that they would have been given the keys to the city, and there would have been a huge revival. Well, all that happens is one woman gets saved by the riverside. Her name is Lydia. She's a seller of purple from Thyatira, which, by the way, was the very area that Paul and his company had tried to go to, and the Holy Spirit had forbidden them. So now Lydia, who has this lucrative business in purple dyeing, there was a dyeing guild where they would make these purple garments for the Roman empire in Thyatira. And so, through her business contacts, now the gospel is going to go there. The truth is none of us can be it all. None of us can be everywhere. None of us can do it all. God is weaving this amazing plan together.

So, Lydia and her household get saved and baptized. Paul and his company are staying with them. And this girl with an evil spirit, she's a fortune teller, starts following them and saying, "These men are servants of the most high God. They have come to show us the way of salvation." And what she said was right, but nobody needs a demon advertising for them. Paul casts the spirit out of this girl, and consequently, her masters realize that their profit is now gone because she can't tell fortunes anymore. She can't see into the future anymore. So, they get Paul and Silas in trouble. The city officials take them and throw them in prison. They put their feet in stocks. They're bound. They've been beaten without mercy. The truth is when we're summoned by God, and the title of this message is The Summons and the Sending. So, first, there's a summons, but sometimes, when you receive a summons from God and are being used by God, sent by God to help somebody, there's going to be setbacks because the devil never gives up ground uncontested.

I'm in a beautiful studio here on our church campus at the moment. It's a beautiful campus. Thousands of people attend here every week, and so many people are getting saved. Lives are getting changed. It's an amazing place, and we're so thankful for it. But oh, did we have a fight. From the day that we first engaged property until we finally moved in, it was nine years. About five of those years were spent in court battles. I was sued by two cities simultaneously, multimillion-dollar lawsuits, and the newspapers took us to task. I could get into the story, but it was not pretty. It was pretty ugly. It was pretty hard for many, many years, but here we are. And the truth is the devil may succeed in delaying what God wants to do through us, but he cannot deny if we will keep our song. That brings us to the next thing in this. There's the summons, and there's the setbacks, which inevitably will happen.

How to Walk in God's Will (Part 2)

We're living in a fallen world. We do have an adversary called the devil. The Scripture says he walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We're to resist him steadfast in the faith. James said, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Submit yourself to God. Resist the devil, and the devil's gone. But you know what? Sometimes, he creates circumstances that may hinder and may delay. But again, I'm going to say it. He may be able to delay, but he cannot ultimately deny us if we refuse to lose our song. And that has to do with worshiping in the midnight hour. So, now we have Paul and Silas. They've been thrown into prison. They're in that dark, dank, musty prison cell. It says in verse 25 of Acts 16, "But at midnight, at the darkest hour..." Maybe you're at a midnight hour right now and things look really dark for you. Listen to what they did.

²⁵ But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

The word for praying in this Word certainly encompassed the thought of praying and talking to God, but it's a common word for worship. We could very easily read it this way. Paul and Silas were worshiping and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. So, they were not being quiet about it. They're worshiping God, and they're singing in their midnight hour. Think about it. Their backs are bleeding. They're restricted. They've been treated unfairly. They've been in prison. It's the midnight hour, and they are singing. The prisoners were listening, but the prisoners weren't the only ones who were listening. We read in verse 26, it says, "Suddenly," man, I love the suddenlys of God.

²⁶ Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

Not just the chains of Paul and Silas, but everyone was impacted. Friend, good things can happen to you if you hang around with the right people. So, the prisoners weren't the only ones listening. God was listening. He sent an earthquake that opened the prison doors, and set them free. When I was a teenager, I, in fact, I still do like certain styles of music. I'm an old rock and roll guy. I like blues. Anyway, I was 17 years old and this song came out on the radio. We basically just had AM radio then. I think they just started with some FM stations around that time here where I lived in California. I heard this song, and it was the most amazing song I'd ever heard, this sort of cross between a rock and roll blues song. I just fell in love with the thing. I mean, it was my song, and I'd heard it two or three times. I asked my friends, I said, "Have you heard this song?" And they said, "No, we haven't heard it." I said, "Oh man, this thing is amazing!"

We were all going to a party or something one night. I'm driving this old Ford van, and we've got the crackly AM radio turned up to the rock and roll station. And my song came on. I pulled over to the side of the road. I said, "Guys, this is the song." I turned it up as loud as it would go. We sat there, and we listened to my song. It got my attention. Well, you know what? I just picture the heavenly Father surrounded by all the angels on His glorious throne in heaven, and heavenly business is being transacted. It's going on, and all of a sudden, God goes, "Hey, stop! I hear My song. Do you hear that? There's somebody, and they're in trouble. They're worshiping Me. Things aren't going right for them. And they're worshiping Me. Circumstances seem to be against them, but they have a song of praise on their lips." I don't know if God just started tapping His foot or what, but man, this earthquake happens, and they get set free. Friend, when you worship in your midnight hour, I'm telling you, that is God's song. That is what His ears love to hear. It is pleasing to Him, and there's nothing that would keep you from doing it

How to Walk in God's Will (Part 2)

if you choose to do it. There's more that actually happens here in verse 27 to, actually, maybe I'll read down to verse 31. Listen to it. Acts 16:27–31 NKJV says,

²⁷ And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.
²⁸ But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."
²⁹ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.
³⁰ And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Now, it's interesting in the Greek language. When I read it here, he says, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He literally said, "Lords, what must I do to be saved?" It's the identical word used in verse 31 when Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." First of all, this jailer realized that he was among superiors. He called them lords. Paul says, "Okay, do you want to be saved? You need to call on the Lord, the one Lord and ruler of humanity. You'll be saved and your household." He was saved and took them to his house and provided a meal for them. Paul preached to the guy's family, and they got saved. So, now we have some more converts in this fledgling church in the city of Philippi. This jailer would have been a grizzled ex-Roman soldier. He would have seen a lot of carnage in his life. He would have seen a lot of death in his life. He was very, very calloused to human suffering. I mean, you think about it. He's no dummy. He knows that Paul and Silas have been railroaded. He knows that they've been unjustly accused, and now, he's been commanded to put them in the prison. So, this guy sees these guys, and their backs are bleeding. They're wounded. They've been treated unjustly. He doesn't care. He puts their feet in the stocks and what does he do? These guys are suffering. He doesn't clean their wounds. He doesn't give them anything to drink. He doesn't give them anything to eat. He doesn't care. What does he do? He goes to sleep, untouched by human suffering and calloused. The only thing that woke him up was the earthquake.

Now, when he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, we find him introducing them to his family, feeding them, and tenderly washing their wounds. Jesus, when He comes into a person's life, He turns the calloused into the caring. He turns thieves and robbers into givers. He turns murderers and terrorists into apostles and evangelists. He turns Saul of Tarsus into the apostle Paul. If Jesus hasn't changed your life and you're calling yourself a Christian, I would say you need to examine the Jesus that you received. You may have gotten the wrong Jesus. You may have gotten brand X. My friend, the Jesus I know, changes people's lives when He comes into their lives. Now, from this point, literally, a spiritual stronghold is broken. It wasn't just the doors to a Roman prison house that were open. It was the door to a continent that was open. If you were with us last time, I mentioned that some historians refer to the conversion of Lydia. She was the first one saved, the first European convert saved there by the Riverside in Philippi. Some people refer to her conversion as the turning point of Western civilization.

So, now, this foothold to bring the gospel into Europe has happened, and it literally has been a shaking loose of something. This city that had been oppressed by the devil, this place of darkness, that darkness has broken over it. Now, this church that is one of the most amazing churches that we read about in the New Testament, is formed. It grows because when Paul writes to them in the book of Philippians, it was actually, yes, written to Lydia. It was written to her household. It was written to the jailer. It was written to his household. I believe that demon-possessed girl who got set free, got saved, and then ended up becoming a member of the church. Paul refers to leaders in the church, so we knew that it grew and that it flourished. It just reminds me I was talking to a friend once. I was speaking in a particular nation, and the

How to Walk in God's Will (Part 2)

government in that nation was extremely corrupt. It had basically raped and bankrupted the nation. It had been responsible for mass murders and, kicking thousands of people out of the country and seizing their lands. It was a very difficult place to preach in. He was actually originally an American missionary and then had started a church there and was flourishing despite the difficult circumstances.

I'll never forget it. He said to me one day, he said, "Bayless, the liberty that you have in your church and that you have there in California." And I know some people listening to me; you hear all this stuff in the news media about California being so ultra-liberal and doing crazy things. Well, a lot of that is true, but do you know what? There is still a spiritual liberty, and we do have freedom to preach the gospel. And he said, "Bayless, never take that liberty for granted." He said, "We fight spiritual oppression here every day. You can just feel it in the atmosphere." He was right. This spiritual oppression that was over the city of Philippi, I believe that it was broken through these things that happened. This amazing fountain was opened up that was going to take the living waters of the gospel from there into all of Europe. I just want to ask you, if you're in your midnight hour, do you have your song? Are you worshiping God? I realize I'm talking to some people right now, and you have been going through some horrific things. I'm sure there's a lady watching me, and you found out your husband has been unfaithful, or you're in an abusive relationship, and you're at your wits end. Or maybe drugs have just got their claws into you, and you feel like there's no getting free for you. Or maybe you're a pastor of a church, and your city council has been against you and made things very difficult for you.

What I want to encourage you to do is to sing in your midnight hour because the truth is, listen carefully to me. There are some places that you need to get into, and the only way to get in is to sing your way in. There are some circumstances that you may need to get out of, and the only way to get out is to sing your way out and to worship your way out. The Bible says in the book of Psalms that God inhabits the praises of His people, Psalm 22. Another translation says that God is enthroned upon the singing praises of His people. Literally, the authority of God comes down when we sing. Especially when we sing, worship Him, and exercise our faith in that way in the midnight hour. The Bible says in the book of Isaiah that God meets the one who rejoices. The Scripture says in Psalm 8 that God has put praises in the mouth of babes to stop and still the enemy and the avenger. Jesus actually interpreted that verse from Psalm 8 that literally, the praises of God, are the strength of God and they will stop the work of the enemies. It causes him to be still, which means to cease and desist from activity.

So, hey, if you're there, you may feel like you have lead weights tied to your hands. I'm saying lift them anyway. You may feel like your voice is muffled, and the last thing in the world you want to do is sing to God and worship Him because life is so hard for you right now. Do it anyway. Do it by faith, and stay at it. Sing in your midnight hour. This brings us to the final thing that I want to talk to you about. First was the summons. Then, there was the setback. Then, there was the sending. Then, there was the song. Then, there's the sending, and that is when the gospel is sent out to others. Giving back so others can be blessed. From Philippi, if we read in the book of Acts, Paul goes to Thessalonica. He goes to Berea. He goes to Athens. He goes to Corinth. He goes to all of these different regions in different cities, preaching the gospel, establishing churches, winning souls, and bringing the Word of the Lord to them. Who paid for all that? Where did Paul get the money to travel and to do everything he did? It was from this little church in Philippi. They supported him as he went to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and beyond. They realized they had the great responsibility and the privilege to now send the gospel to others. They had been reached, and now, they have become partners in reaching

How to Walk in God's Will (Part 2)

others. Let me read to you from 2 Corinthians 11, beginning in verses 7–9a NKJV. Paul writes to the Corinthians and he says,

⁷ Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? ⁸ I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. ⁹ And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied.

So, he's in this great city of Corinth, one of the great cities of the ancient world. It's still an amazing city. I have been there. Paul says, "Look, when I was with you, I was able to do what I did because of the Macedonians." Lydia, the seller of purple, her household, the jailer, his family, and others that had come to Christ, maybe that little fortune teller girl. They'd taken up offerings, and they had sent them to the apostle Paul. That's why he was able to preach there. Let me read on. This is Philippians 1, and this is what Paul actually wrote to these people. He said in Philippians 1:3–5, and I want to read this to you from the Amplified Classic. He said,

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you. ⁴ In every prayer of mine I always make my entreaty and petition for you all with joy (delight). ⁵ [I thank my God] for your fellowship (your sympathetic cooperation and contributions and partnership) in advancing the good news (the Gospel) from the first day [you heard it] until now.

Now, Paul thanked them and he said, "From the first day you heard it," in other words, from the day that God opened Lydia's heart on the riverside, and she gave her life to Christ, and then opened her home, from that day to this day, when he's writing many years later, Paul says, "From that day to this time, you have not ceased to send contributions, and to support this work that has been going on through my ministry." That's an amazing thing if you think about it. They become partakers with Paul and participants with the apostle Paul. Let me read on verse 15. This is amazing. So, they've been supporting him consistently and continually for years in all the places that he went and preached. Philippians 4:15–18 NKJV, he said,

¹⁵ Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. (He said, "You're the only ones." He said,) ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. (You didn't just do it once, you continued with it.) ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. (Amazing. He said) ¹⁸ Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

So, they're giving, according to Paul, to him and to support his ministry. Their giving was sacrificial. He actually wrote to the Corinthians about the sacrificial giving of the Macedonians to try and inspire the Corinthians to follow suit and to give as well. The fact is, when our heart is open to God, our hands should be open to God as well. Closed hands mean a closed heart. So, Paul said, "It's not that I'm seeking the gift." Certainly, he recognized and told them clearly that your aid has helped. It's been well-pleasing to God. It's risen as an aroma that has brought delight and joy to God, and that in itself should be enough. He said, "God is well-pleased." He said, "It's not just that I'm looking for the gift, but I'm seeking the fruit that abounds to your account." What is he talking about? First of all, he's talking about the souls that he won. That was fruit that abounded to their account in the ledgers of heaven when the apostle Paul won converts through his preaching in the gospel, that went down to the account of the Philippian Christians, to Lydia, and to the jailer, and to his family, and to that demon-possessed girl who

How to Walk in God's Will (Part 2)

had been set free. Fruit that abounded their accounts. When Jesus looked at all the Samaritans coming out of the city after the woman had gone to them, and said, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did; this has to be the Messiah." Jesus looks on the sea of humanity coming to Him, and He said, "The harvest is ripe. It's ready for harvest. It's ripe." He talked, in the Scripture, about the harvest of human souls being a fruit unto God. So, the fruit that abounded to their account—all the souls that were won, the marriages that were restored, the demon-possessed people who were set free, the sick people who were healed, the prostitutes who were rescued, the children who were trained, all of that spiritual fruit went to their account.

I'm sure when they got to heaven, God said, "Look, your reward is great. Thousands upon thousands, in fact, not just that, millions of people have come to Christ because of you." They're going to say, "Lord, when?" He said, "Well, you supported the apostle Paul. He wrote two-thirds of the New Testament. He won souls. I used him, but he could only do that and that was only possible because of your support because you sent him. So, the reward doesn't just go to him; it goes to you." Perhaps a sea of humanity that will last tens of thousands of years would come up to them and say, "Thank you. I was saved because you gave. My marriage was restored. I was plagued with oppression, and I was set free because of the Word of the Lord. It never would have happened if you didn't give." And on and on and on. I know there's people who support us on a regular basis. And I just have to say thank you. We take these broadcasts, and we broadcast in like 130 something countries.

We broadcast in right now, numerous different languages, I think, 11 main languages we broadcast in. We do all sorts of things, not just through television but through social media and multiple languages around the world. You may be hearing this right now, yourself, in a language other than English. If you support us, all of the fruit, all of the people who have been won to Christ, the lives that have been changed, the churches that have been started, and on and on, that's all fruit that abounds to your account. I know there are so many good works that God is involved in around the world and churches and those who support those good works, the fruit that comes from them goes to your account. And their giving was, as I said, sacrificial and well-pleasing to God. Then, because of their continued sacrificial, willing, joyous giving, Paul gives them this promise. And you can't divorce the promise from its setting. The promise is this: to those who give, missionally and those who give sacrificially, and those who support the work of the Lord. Philippians 4:19 NKJV,

¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Thank God that is a promise. He doesn't just supply all our need according to our need. If He did that, then once the need is met, the supply is done, but it says He supplies our need according to His riches, meaning a surplus. He gives us enough to meet our needs with sufficient leftover to help somebody else. That is just God's way. He's a God of abundance. And we need to give back so others can be blessed. That is a normal part of kingdom life. It's the normal expression of gratitude and of faith from a true believer's heart. If your life has been changed from the gospel, you ought to be giving, so that others can be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Again, I want to close today just by saying thank you to those of you who pray for us and those of you who give. We couldn't do what we do without your support. So, there's much fruit that's abounding to your account. I just pray right now that in your circumstance, in your situation, however difficult it might be, that you would find your song and that in a spirit of faith, you would lift your voice and lift your hands and worship God for His goodness, worship God for His deliverance and for the fact that He sees you and that He loves you and that He

How to Walk in God's Will (Part 2)

has a compassionate heart flowing out to you. I just want to close by saying thanks. Thank you. We're involved in an eternal work, and you're a part of it. God bless.

Copyright © Answers with Bayless Conley