

## **In Crunch Time, Will You Keep Serving? Acts 16:1-8**

### **Introduction:**

1. Once you trust Christ and become a Christian, you immediately switch teams. You go from being on the devil's team to being on God's team.
2. On God's team, there are two kinds of players:
  - There are players who sit on the sidelines and never contribute much to the cause of the team. They may talk a good game, but there is little action.
  - There are players who are out on the field playing their hearts out, trying to do everything they can to advance the cause of Christ.
3. The Bible says that we are to serve the Lord fervently after we are saved. When the Thessalonians got saved they are said to have turned **from** their idols to **serve** the living and true God. 1 Thessalonians 1:9
4. When you are active out on the playing field you are going to incur some bruises and bumps. There **is** an opposing team, and Satan isn't going to give you a free pass to trot down the field. He is going to try to hit you and take you out of the game.
5. The book of Acts chronicles the life of one of God's servants, the apostle Paul. Paul served the Lord fervently, but it wasn't without pain and hurt.
6. We saw, at the end of chapter 15, that Paul had a sharp contention with one of his best friends, Barnabas. It ended up with both men going their separate ways. This had to devastate and hurt Paul deeply.
7. But Paul did not quit. In fact, in chapter 16 he launches out on his second missionary journey with Silas, and they see some incredible victories for Christ. We must continue to serve God, even through disappointments.
8. How could Paul continue to effectively serve the Lord, even after the disputes and disappointments of chapter 15? We see several keys in our text.

### **First, we must understand the need for partnership.**

1. After the painful falling out with Barnabas, does Paul get bitter and cynical, and decide to travel alone on his next missionary journey?
2. No, but rather he chose Silas as his companion in travel (15:40). Then, in Acts 16:1-3, Paul also invited another young man named Timothy to travel with the team. Notice it says, "*Him would Paul have to go forth **with him**...*"
3. Even though Paul was hurt by the contention with Barnabas, he knew he needed others.
4. God put within us the need for human relationships (Genesis 2:18). As we serve God, we must serve Him together with other believers. Isn't "must" kind of a strong word? Consider passages like 1 John 1:6-7.
  - We have been placed **together** in the body of Christ (Ephesians 2:21-22), seated **together** in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), we will one day be

caught up **together** to meet Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:17), and we will live **together** eternally with Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:10

- Because of these facts, God's plan is that we labor together (1 Corinthians 3:9) and strive together (Philippians 1:27) right now on earth as we serve Christ.
5. This is precisely why Paul always organized believers into local churches.

### **Second, we must possess an attitude of practicality.**

1. Timothy was most likely saved during Paul's first missionary journey. It appears that he was probably a preteen or young teen when he got saved. Now, in our text, it is six years later, and Paul comes back through this area.
2. Timothy had a Christian mother who was Jewish and a father (who apparently was not saved) who was a Gentile (vs. 1). Timothy had built up quite a testimony as a young man who loved and served God. vs. 2
3. When Paul asked Timothy to travel with him, he immediately had Timothy go through the Jewish rite of circumcision. This seems a bit odd, doesn't it?
4. This was the same Paul who just traveled all the way to Jerusalem to fight for the Gentile's freedom from the Jewish law and circumcision. Why would he do this?
  - Timothy's father was a Greek, but his mother a Jew and he was raised Jewish.
  - Remember, Paul's first contact in a city was usually at the synagogue with Jews.
  - The Gentiles would accept a missionary who was wholly Jewish much more readily than the Jews would accept a missionary who was half Gentile.
5. Paul was amazingly practical. He was willing to die for the truth that circumcision was unnecessary for salvation, yet he was willing to circumcise a young man in order to remove a possible hindrance to the gospel. I'm sure others may have accused Paul of compromising, but he wasn't. He was simply being practical. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23
6. When it comes to God's Word, we must never compromise. But when it is an issue of preference or methodology, we must be practical so that we can win others to Christ.
7. While we have no right to give up our liberty in Christ (Galatians 5:1), we do have liberty to give up our rights. Galatians 5:13
8. So many times, Christians and churches hang on to traditions and preferences as if they were treasured doctrinal truths. We turn people off from the gospel when we could possibly reach them with a little grace, flexibility, and practicality.

### **Third, we must exercise a patient spirit.**

1. Paul and his group began their trip by visiting the churches they had established on their first journey, and helping them to become more established in their faith. vs. 4-5

2. But then, two times in a row, Paul desired to preach the gospel in certain areas, and the Holy Spirit shut the door and would not allow them to do so. vs. 6-7
3. Was there a need for Paul's gospel and Paul's ministry in these areas? Of course there was, yet it was clearly not what God desired. Why is this? We will never know why.
4. Was Paul troubled by this? Was he frustrated? Was his soul burdened as he wondered why God would not allow him to minister in these areas?
5. Yet Paul was patient and he kept moving until God made things clear. vs. 8
6. Let me make application. When we serve the Lord - that is, when we are on the playing field for Christ - not every play we call will be a touchdown or a slam dunk.
7. Paul was an apostle, yet he called a play in verse 6 and the Holy Spirit vetoed it. He called another play in verse 7, and again the Holy Spirit called an audible.
8. When you serve the Lord, it takes patience. Sometimes you have to hurry up and wait. We tend to be very impatient people by nature, and we can many times run ahead, not seek God, try to force open doors, and manipulate situations.  
Romans 12:12
  - One of the qualifications of a spiritual leader in 1 Timothy 3:3 is "*patient.*" cf. 2 Timothy 2:24
9. Patience is an essential part of serving the Lord - patience when things don't go our way, patience with other believers, patience when we make bad calls and blow it.
10. When you serve the Lord, things are not always smooth sailing. It takes a great deal of patience.

### **In Conclusion:**

1. Are you on God's team? That is the first question.
2. If so, are you an active player for Christ, or on the sidelines?
3. If you are on the playing field serving Christ, there will be disappointments and hurts. How do you continue on?
  - Understand the need for partnership.
  - Possess an attitude of practicality.
  - Exercise a patient spirit.
4. Serving the Lord is not easy, but the lives that we impact for Christ will be our joy in heaven! 1 Thessalonians 2:19