

TITLE: SPIRITUAL PRODDING

TEXT: ACTS 1:8-11

INTRO: Jesus was ALL about doing His Father's will and speaking only those things that God told him (**Jn 4:34; 5:19; 8:28**). He was always about his father's business, even at age twelve (**Lk 2:49**). Unfortunately, you and I usually aren't that focused! We need to be prodded and reminded of the work we're to be doing. The apostles and early church also had to be reminded of their mission: **1:8** – "*ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*"

I. TO JERUSALEM & JUDEA (Acts 1:10-11):

- A. Jesus gave the great commission (**Mt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8**), then ascended to Heaven.
- B. But the apostles just stood there staring (as we would've too)! They'd been given their orders, but weren't going yet.
- C. The two men (angels) – "Why are you gazing into Heaven?" He IS coming back! So get to work!
- D. They 'snap out of it,' return to Jerusalem, pray, and prepare for the work (replacing Judas w/Matthias -v. 12-26).
- E. Then the Holy Spirit came as promised and the kingdom work began. *But it took a little angelic prodding to get them moving!

II. TO SAMARIA (Acts 8:4):

- A. The church had been enjoying great success, in spite of some early persecution against the apostles (ch. 4 & 5) and minor disputes within the church (ch. 6).
- B. Persecution began to increase with the stoning of Stephen (ch. 7), until "there was a great persecution against the church" (**8:1**).
- C. In 8:4, those who were scattered by the persecution went everywhere preaching the word! It would seem this persecution didn't have the desired effect!
- D. The church's mission was to go into all the world, starting at Jerusalem (**1:8**). Yet they were still in Jerusalem (**5:16; 8:1**).
- E. It seems that this persecution was the spiritual prodding the church needed to continue the great commission.
 - 1. Philip went into Samaria, then down to the Ethiopian eunuch (ch. 8).
 - 2. Ananias was in Damascus and taught Saul (ch. 9).
 - 3. Peter went down through the coastal regions (Lydda and Joppa), then to Caesarea to Cornelius (ch. 10-11).

III. TO THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH (Acts 13:2):

- A. The mission was still "go into all the world." But so far, they had gone only as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, & Antioch (**11:19**).
- B. **11:26** – Barnabas brought Paul from Tarsus to Antioch, and they stayed there a year. Then they went to Jerusalem (**11:30**).
- C. The Holy Spirit chose Paul and Barnabas for the continuation of the mission (**13:2**).
- D. From here, the kingdom spread throughout Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Italy (missionary journeys).
- E. From here, others would be found who would get involved in the mission (Titus, Apollos, Timothy, Epaphroditus, etc.).

IV. TODAY'S GREAT COMMISSION:

- A. **Mt 28:19-20** – Jesus told the apostles to teach all nations, baptizing them, and "*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" These teachings/commandments of Jesus were to be passed on to others (and they were passed on). And they have come to us. What will we do with them?
- B. God still expects His people to go to the world. **2 Cor 4:6-7** – "*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*" This is our mission!
 - 1. God, in Creation, caused physical light to shine out of the physical darkness (**Gen 1:2-3** – "*darkness was on the face of the deep... God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*").
 - 2. God now causes spiritual light (the gospel) to shine out of us (who were in spiritual darkness). **We** are the earthen vessels!
 - 3. **Mt 5:16**– "*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works & glorify your Father which is in Heaven*"
 - 4. If we don't shine His light (through our example and our evangelism), then obviously there is no light in us.
- C. Like the apostles and early church, sometimes we also need a little spiritual prodding and reminding of our task.
- D. In each example we've looked at, the ones being prodded **responded in obedience**, carrying out God's evangelistic command.
- E. What about you? We all have friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, etc. who are lost. What will our response be?

CONCLUSION: Sometimes a little prodding is all we need to get back to work. But unfortunately, many Christians are well beyond the prodding stage. Sometimes there's a fine line between simply be a little inactive (just needing a nudge), and being completely unwilling to work. Failure to do God's will (and failure to heed His encouragement) is sin. What would've happened to Peter and the apostles if they had decided to ignore God's mission for them?