

97-07-06a

As we continue in our worship this morning, we hear the rain falling outside. Return with me to the Gospel of Mark for our Scripture reading. The Gospel of Mark, chapter 1, beginning at verse 29.

There is a great parallel in this episode in the early ministry of Jesus Christ to the things we're going to look at in Romans, chapter 15 this morning. It will not be immediately apparent, but we will return to draw that parallel a little bit later this morning. But notice in Mark, chapter 1, verse 29, Jesus and his disciples are operating in the region of Galilee.

As soon as they had come out of the synagogue, this is in Capernaum, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told him about her at once. So he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her, and she served them.

At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed, and the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then he healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons, and he did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew him. Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, he went out and departed to a solitary place, and there he prayed.

Simon and those who were with him searched for him. When they found him, they said to him, Everyone is looking for you. But he said to them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.

And he was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and casting out demons. This episode has impressed me from the first time that I studied it in detail, because of the decision that Jesus makes in these circumstances. He is in the early part of his ministry.

He is in Capernaum where he is teaching in the synagogue. He goes to Simon's house, the foundations of which have been discovered, and in the past we have looked at some pictures of that archaeological excavation in the Biblical Archaeology Review. It is very interesting to see its relationship to the site of the synagogue, which is also well known, and you can stand there and actually see the Sea of Galilee from that spot.

But Jesus is there, and he addresses a problem that Peter's mother-in-law has, lifting her up so that fever relieves her, and she serves him. And then at evening, when the sun had set, and of course this is because it was the Sabbath, and no one wanted to do any traveling or be in any danger of breaking the law on the Sabbath, but when the sun had set, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. This involved a lot of carrying and litter-bearing and so forth to bring these ailing people to Jesus.

The whole city was gathered together at the door. There's quite a huge crowd who has come and recognized this sign-gift ministry that Jesus is conducting. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, cast out many demons.

He did not allow the demons to speak. But after this evening, which I'm sure lasted several hours, of exercising this ministry, bestowing this grace, healing, these people weren't asked, do you have faith? They weren't asked, do you know who this is, who does this for you, or anything. They came and Jesus healed them.

It was a grace operation. But Jesus, in the middle of the night, gets up and goes away by himself to a solitary place, and there he prays. Jesus has a decision to make about whether to stay in this area, to stay in Capernaum, and continue to do what he has done that evening, or to move on.

And so he goes out by himself. He gets away where he has a chance to think clearly, to commune with his Father, and to, I think the occasion for this middle-of-the-night prayer session was to confirm in his own mind what he would do next. Simon and those who were with him searched for him.

When they found him, they said, everyone is looking for you. The crowd is already starting to gather. It's early in the morning, and there's already another crowd just like we had last night.

What a great opportunity. Here's another chance to demonstrate the supernatural power that indicates who you are. But he says to them, let us go into the next towns that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.

Jesus answers the question about what he should do based on his purpose. Is it a wrong thing to heal people? Is it a wrong thing for this sign ministry to be manifested? Obviously not. Jesus spent the entire previous evening doing that.

The question is, how long should he stay there and do that? And Jesus makes that decision, even though conventional wisdom, the disciples all think, boy, this is great. Look at the following we're getting. Look at the crowds that are coming.

What a great opportunity. And Jesus, this would never happen today. If somebody was having a ministry and got the stadium rented or whatever, and huge crowds came, nobody would walk away and say, we're going to go somewhere else.

If you're a speaker or one of these modern-day evangelists for some cause, especially in Christianity, when a crowd gathers, will you never walk away and go somewhere else? There's an opportunity. And yet this is exactly what Jesus does. There's a larger crowd than there was the night before, and he walks away and leaves them.

He's nowhere to be found. He goes to other villages. And we get insight into why he does that in

verse 38.

Let's go to the next towns that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth. It's not a bad thing to heal. It's a part of Jesus' ministry.

It's a part of the confirming witness of the Holy Spirit to who he is. But that task has been accomplished. That foundation has been laid.

And Jesus doesn't belabor that point. He saw something in the crowd that told him that he had done as much as he could do in his primary mission of preaching the gospel. The message was out.

The message had been confirmed, and it was time to go preach that good news of the kingdom elsewhere. So Jesus here gives us an example of discerning between good things and better things. Nothing sinful.

Nothing wrong. If he had remained in Capernaum, there would have been no fault found with him. But there's a better thing in the light of his purpose.

And Jesus understands who he is and why he is here. And so he goes on. This is one of the more advanced tests that we face as believers.

Our basic tests involve figuring out what's right and what's wrong. And sometimes that consumes a lot of our early growth years as believers, just discerning the difference between good and evil. But as we mature, we know from the end of Hebrews chapter 5, that mature believers have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

And once we have advanced a little bit, and we have knowledge of the word of God, and we are growing in grace and knowledge, and we've gotten a little ways down that narrow road, our tests start to be more sophisticated. It's not as easy as telling the difference between the white dot and the black dot, between the good thing and the evil thing. We start learning how to discern between good things and better things.

And as we turn to Romans chapter 15 this morning, we're going to see an instance of this same principle in the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. We have seen that this letter, we reviewed it last week, and we understand that Paul's purpose in writing to the church at Rome is to communicate to them the gospel that he hopes to confirm and to add to in person. But he's never been able to make it to Rome.

He has, for one reason or another, often been hindered from coming to them. And he's going to explain that here in chapter 15. We saw last time that his ministry has been in a circle, actually a semi-circle, in verse 19.

He says that Christ has accomplished many things through him in word and deed to make the

Gentiles obedient in mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. If you look at a map, if you have a map of the Mediterranean and Palestine and so forth in your Bible, you'll notice that Jerusalem is due east of the Mediterranean Sea, more or less. And reading the accounts in Acts, we know that Paul has preached in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

We really only have one reference to that, but we know that he preached in that vicinity. And then all the way up the coast heading northward into Asia Minor and into Cappadocia and Galatia and Bithynia, all of these regions. This is where Ephesus, Lystra, Derbe, Antioch, Iconium, well-known names to us are located in the area south of the Black Sea.

He has crossed over into the Greek regions of Corinth and Athens and Philippi and Thessalonica are up in those areas. And if you trace this on the map, you can see that it makes a semi-circle. And he uses the Greek word for circle when he says, I have preached from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum.

And this covers the regions of Judea, of Syria up in Antioch in that area and then turning the corner around the northeastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea into Cappadocia and Cilicia and all of the regions of Asia Minor and then all the way over into as far as Illyricum. And Illyricum, if you remember the boot of Italy that sticks down into the north part of the Mediterranean Sea and then just to the east of that you have the Adriatic Sea and then beyond that you have the Greek Peloponnesus. Well, the area directly opposite the heel of the boot heading east is Illyricum.

And Paul has been up in that region, that's Illyricum and Dalmatia and it's the northwestern edge of Macedonia. This is, for example, where Philippi is and Thessalonica. They're on the far side of that region.

So Paul has been all around this area and what has he been doing? He's been preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This has involved evangelism specifically, naming Christ where he has not been named before and establishing the foundation upon which all of the subsequent pastors and elders and teachers of the Word of God will build. And that's his mission.

We've spent the last two Friday nights documenting what the apostolic commission is and throughout his writing we find Paul confirming that this is his job as an apostle. That's his calling. That's why Jesus Christ confronted him on the road to Damascus.

And Paul says he has fully preached the Gospel of Christ in Romans 15, 19. Now does this mean that everything that can be preached has been preached and every soul that can be evangelized in these regions has been evangelized? Not at all. What it does mean is that Paul has covered the ground as far as his apostolic commission is concerned.

Churches have been created. Elders have been trained. Pastors have been raised up and trained.

They've traveled with Paul and they have been scattered through these regions and they are now teaching the Word of God and completing those things that Paul has left undone. That's what he tells Titus in the first chapter of that letter. He says this is the reason that I left you in Crete, that you can finish up what I have left undone.

And so Paul says, I have made it my aim to preach the Gospel in verse 20, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another's foundation. This is the job of the apostles, to build a foundation. Now, in the region of Palestine, in the region around Jerusalem, who's been building that foundation? Who's been laying that foundation? The eleven.

You have Peter, James, John, Philip, Andrew, all of the eleven disciples that Jesus commissioned and he said you will be witnesses unto me where? In Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria. Paul has spent very little time, and in fact he makes a point of that elsewhere, I can't remember now if it's in Galatians or Colossians, where he talks about the fact that he spent very little time in those regions because people were saying, well, you're just giving us a second-hand Gospel. And he says, not at all.

I spent very little time with the other disciples. I got my Gospel straight from Christ. And so he spent very little time there because the foundation was being laid there by the other eleven apostles.

He is the apostle to the Gentiles. And so he has been going and laying that foundation where Christ has not yet been named. And these are in non-Jewish regions.

And so he says in verse 22, this is the reason that I have been much hindered from coming to you. Paul hasn't made it to Rome yet because he has been busy, in a sense, building out to that region, starting in Jerusalem and going north and then heading west around the north edge of the Mediterranean Sea and up across the Adriatic and so forth. And he says in verse 23, But now, no longer having a place in these parts and having a great desire these many years to come to you, whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you.

For I hope to see you on my journey and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who were in Jerusalem.

It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

And I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in

Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that I may come to you with joy by the will of God and may be refreshed together with you. Now the God of peace be with you all.

Amen. And that's how chapter 15 ends. This is a fascinating section of Scripture, and it is related to our Scripture reading this morning in Mark.

Because here is a case where the apostle Paul is making a choice. He is choosing between good alternatives. There are poor in Jerusalem.

There have always been poor. Jesus told people in Judea and in Galilee, the poor you have with you always, me you do not have always. We can see as far back as Acts chapter 11, a note to the effect that the church in Antioch sent some monetary aid to Jerusalem, to the Jerusalem church.

This is in Acts 11.29. This is a worthy thing. It's a wonderful thing to do when we have the opportunity to help someone who is in financial dire straits. It is a good thing.

There's nothing wrong with it. But notice in Acts 11.29, the disciples determined everyone according to his ability to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders, how? By the hand of Barnabas and Saul, who is Paul.

What was the occasion for this? Well, look a few verses earlier in Acts 11. In these days, this is Acts 11.27, in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world.

And this took place in the days of Claudius. The disciples determined everyone according to his ability to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

It's important to note the details of this episode because it bears directly on what Paul is talking about in Romans 15. First of all, God sent word through these individuals who had the New Testament gift of prophecy, such as Agabus, that there was going to be a great famine. God warned them ahead of time, a famine is coming, which implies the whole reason God would say that ahead of time is so people can make some sort of preparation, some sort of provision.

When this word of God came to the disciples, the believers who were up there in Antioch, they, in verse 29 of Acts 11, the disciples determined everyone according to his ability. This word of God provoked a response in their soul. They said there's going to be a great need, especially down in the region of Jerusalem.

These prophets came from Jerusalem saying that this famine was coming. And so these disciples heard that word of God and it provoked in them a response. I think I can do something to help in a material way with this coming famine.

And so each of them, according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea. And they did so, and they sent it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul. So Paul participated in this.

He saw the response that the word of God had among the believers in Antioch. They were motivated as a result of that word of God, and I think in the hands of the Holy Spirit in their souls, saw an opportunity to be of material assistance. They, in their own hearts, figured out what they could do according to their ability.

They gathered together a gift, and they looked around to find somebody to take this gift back to Jerusalem. And they entrusted it to Barnabas and to Paul. Well, Paul and Barnabas took this gift back down to Judea, back down to the believers down there, and delivered it.

And as you can imagine, I'm sure there was great gratitude. There was great appreciation for the believers in Antioch who had sent this gift. And I'm sure that this helped to establish a wonderful rapport and relationship between the church of Antioch and the believers down in Judea and in Jerusalem.

This is a part of Paul's experience. This is something that Paul remembers, I'm sure. Paul has been preaching for many years in these regions that he has just mentioned, Syria, Asia Minor, all the way around almost to Italy.

He has always been looked upon with some suspicion by the earliest church, the church in Jerusalem. A lot of them have not forgotten his persecution of believers. A lot of them did not understand his calling and his commission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

There are a lot of legalistic Jews down there. We've noted in the past the problems that the men of James had and the effect that they had on other believers, such as Peter. And so even among the believers who acknowledge Jesus Christ and those who acknowledge Paul, there are still some differences.

There's still a degree of unacceptance. And there's a little bit of almost ill will, you might say, between many believers who are down in the Jerusalem church and these Gentile churches, which are Paul's personal, under his personal care. They're his personal ministry.

If you turn to Acts chapter 19, we find Luke's record of these days. Apollos is in Corinth in Acts 19. Paul passes through the upper country and comes to Ephesus.

He finds the disciples who had heard only of the baptism of John, and he teaches them about Christ. In verse 8, he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God. Some were stubborn and disbelieved, speaking evil of the way before the congregation.

He withdrew from them, taking the disciples with him, and argued in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. This is Paul's bread and butter.

This is his commission, and it's exactly what he does. God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul. In verse 11, handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them.

It reminds us of Peter's shadow earlier in Acts. People would just have Peter's shadow fall on them and be healed. There were itinerant Jewish exorcists who undertook to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits.

This is a really comical episode, which we'll skip over for the moment. But look at verse 17, the last part. The name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.

Many also of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. A number of those who practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. They counted the value, found it to be 50,000 pieces of silver.

So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily. Now look at verse 21. Now after these events, Paul resolved in the spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

Having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. Depending on which English translation you have here in verse 21, the word spirit may or may not be capitalized. In the New RSV, which I have been reading from, it is capitalized.

In the New King James, it is capitalized. Who has a New American Standard or an NIV? Is it capitalized or not? In verse 21, Paul resolved in the spirit. Oh, it just says he resolved to go through Macedonia? It's verse 21 of Acts 19.

There is some doubt as to whether this is talking about the Holy Spirit or Paul's human spirit here. There's not a textual problem. The word in the spirit should be there in verse 21.

I'm not sure why the NIV doesn't have it. But it says Paul was in the spirit, in to numati, which doesn't say Holy Spirit or in the spirit of God. It just says in the spirit.

And this is a common way of saying in his spirit. He resolved in his mind or in his spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem. Now, with your finger in that passage, if you turn back to chapter 15 of Romans, Paul says in verse 26 of chapter 15, It pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.

In Acts, Paul says he's going to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem. And

as near as I can tell, Paul, having seen the great work that God is doing here and the vindication, if you will, of his ministry, has decided to go back to Jerusalem and, in a sense, say, I told you so, to justify himself and vindicate himself in the eyes of the Jerusalem church, who has had doubts and many of whom have argued against his ministry and have seen him as an illegitimate apostle and as the Gentile church is being somewhat illegitimate. Well, Paul knows that there are, and continue to be, poor in Jerusalem and even within the church.

And he's thinking back, I believe, to this earlier episode in Acts 11 where a great bond was created between the Antioch church and the Jerusalem church when a need, a financial need, was filled. But note the differences. We don't have any record of prophets coming up from Jerusalem and saying, you know, there's a great famine coming.

The famine has already come and gone. We do not have believers. We don't have any record of believers resolving in their own hearts to respond to this prophetic word of God and meet this need.

What we do have is Paul's encouragement, and we have it recorded in several of our epistles, for believers to give and to make a contribution to the saints who are at Jerusalem. We find this especially in 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. Remember what Corinth is up there in these northern regions? And so Paul has decided that he's going to go through Macedonia and Achaia and then go to Jerusalem in Acts 19.21. And in Acts 15.26 he says, It pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who were in Jerusalem.

He doesn't really talk about his part in encouraging this gift. But he says in verse 27, It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. And this is probably the message that Paul gave in Macedonia and Achaia.

If the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. This is quite similar to Paul's own arguments in Corinthians when he says, Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? If I minister to you spiritual things, should you not minister to me material things? You find this over in 1 Corinthians, I believe it's in chapter... Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 16, where he talks about the collection for the saints. Now concerning the collections for the saints in 1 Corinthians 16.1, Notice what he says, So he is encouraging the church here to make a financial contribution that he will come and pick up, and they can depute some individuals to go with him and carry this at this point when he writes Corinthians.

He's not sure if he's going to go with the gift or not. But he's giving them orders to set aside. And we've often come to this first day of the week passage to substantiate the practice of the earliest days of the church in meeting on Sunday, which is a good thing.

But Paul says this collection for the saints is something that he has given orders about in 1 Corinthians 16.1. You can find the same thing mentioned over in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. This is

something that he goes through at great length. He says, Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God, bestowed on the churches of Macedonia, that in a great trial of affliction, and the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and fellowship of the ministering to the saints, not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

And these are very responsive believers who have been presented with this opportunity by Paul and are giving above and beyond their means, even in this cause. And he talks about this throughout chapter 8 all the way into chapter 9. And in chapter 9, verse 1 of 2 Corinthians, Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you, for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago, and your zeal has stirred up the majority. Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that as I said you may be ready, lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we, not to mention you, should be ashamed of this confident boasting.

Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation. Well, you begin to wonder, with all of the emphasis that Paul places on this monetary gift and sending representatives ahead of time to collect it and sending letters encouraging them to, and ordering them to set it by on the first day of the week, and then he gives them some scriptural encouragement. This I say, he who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully.

So let each one give, as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. Look at verse 12.

The administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God. While through the proof of this ministry they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ and for your liberal sharing with them and with all. So Paul views this as a proof, this financial gift that he's collecting in Macedonia and Achaia and Corinth and so forth.

He says this is going to be a proof of this ministry, that they will glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ. Now, I'm going to give you my belief, and I will label it as my belief. Others disagree.

I encourage you freely to disagree. But there are two principles we need to note here. First of all, Scripture is inspired.

This is one of the things we've recently covered in Theology 401, Introduction to Theology. It's an important thing to remember. It is Scripture that is inspired.

It is not the writer of Scripture who is inspired. And when we talk about inspiration, we are talking about inerrancy and infallibility. The Scriptures as the Word of God, the letters that Paul wrote, the letters that Peter wrote, the gospels that were written by Luke and John and Matthew and Mark, these are inspired.

They are inerrant. They are without error. They are infallible.

They are God's Word. They are God's truth, and there is no error in them. They accurately record everything that God wants to tell us, including the errors that people make.

The Old Testament Scriptures tell us about David's errors and Moses' errors, Adam's errors, Cain's errors. The good and the bad in the history of God's people is recorded in the Scriptures. Paul wrote inspired Scripture.

We sometimes get a little sloppy with our terminology. We say the inspired writer here records for us. Well, it is not the writer that is inspired.

It is the writing that is inspired. And by inspiration, we are talking about inerrant and infallible. Paul, the apostle, is not inerrant, and he is not infallible.

He is probably the most advanced believer in the church age, and he is worthy of every respect and every admiration, but he is not sinlessly perfect. And we have evidence in the Scripture that this mission to Jerusalem was not the better thing. It was a good thing.

Paul desired to help the poor. You can't throw rocks at helping the poor and say, well, that's an evil, bad thing. But Paul had a calling and Paul had a purpose.

There are many gifted individuals in the church. There are many prophets who can go and deliver the word that a famine is coming or that the poor are in dire straits. God has gifted the body in many ways.

He has given some financial resources. He has given others gifts of perception. He has a communication system within the church, and there are many ways in which God can address the needs of the poor.

Paul was a part of that back in Acts 11, and there was a wonderful interaction between the church of Antioch and the church in Jerusalem when God delivered a word by that means, and believers were motivated by the word of God, spontaneously it would seem, to get together a donation and send it back down there. This effort that Paul is organizing here is not a spontaneous effort. We have no record that this was spurred by a prophecy from God or a word from God that said that a famine was coming or that there was a dire need.

These are the same poor that Jerusalem has always had. I believe, and this is an inference, that Paul has a goal in mind, and it's a good goal. He wants to promote unity in the early church.

There is a division between the Gentile churches and the Jerusalem church. There's a rift there that Paul wants to bridge. He wants to vindicate the Gentile churches in the minds of the Jerusalem saints.

Well, how can he do this? Well, he has seen this barrier fall before. He saw it happen between the Antioch church and the Jerusalem church, and it came through a free will expression of ministry, a free will expression of care and concern prompted by the word of God. So Paul, I think, has decided that this worked once, it can work again.

And seeing the great abundance of God's grace and the great growth and response in the Gentile regents to whom he ministers, Paul sees that this is legitimate, and he wants to impress that on the minds of the community from which he came. He is an Israelite of the Israelites. He is a former Pharisee.

He comes out of this heartland of God's people. He comes from the first church. He has been commissioned from the Jerusalem church to go forth along with Barnabas and others.

And so he wants to go back and impress them with the legitimacy of his ministry, and he's doing it in the name of unity. He wants them to glorify God for what God has done in the Gentile churches, and this is a worthy thing. We're going to pause here and take our break, and when we come back, we're going to look at some scriptures that support the contention that I have just laid before you, that this was not, in fact, what Paul should have been doing.

And it has implications for us because we often face these decisions, and as we grow, we have to learn to discern between good things and better things the way Jesus did in Capernaum and the way Paul had the opportunity to do in this situation. So we'll look at what was available to Paul by way of communication from God and see how that compares to what we have available to us by way of communication from God and how we can learn to avoid this pitfall. Let's pause here and take our break.