

# Acts 15:35 - 16:10 "God's Infallible Word to Fallible People"

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me, actually, to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise that your infallible word not only reveals the truth about you and the truth about salvation, but also reveals to us who we really are, who we really are at the depths of our soul and in our day-to-day lives. We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would gently work in us so that your word would form us. And we ask this in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Sort of interesting to do a sermon with the sounds of happy children in the background. That's a nice thing to have happen. One of the things that causes people trouble is dealing with people who think they're always right.

I think every single one of us would know at least one person who thinks that they're always right. It would also probably horrify us if we were to discover that some people hearing this are thinking about us because we don't think we're always right. But it is in fact a human problem that there are some people at all the time who think that they're always right. And there are most people who think that is true of themselves, at least sometimes. Some of us have suffered under people who think that they're always right. And so it's actually made us quite insecure and sort of beat up.

And the other thing is, especially nowadays, a lot of people like to attach themselves to individuals or movements or political ideologies or spiritualities that claim to be always right on everything.

[ 3 : 07 ] And we attach ourselves to these types of groups and it just causes lots of trouble in our society, in our day-to-day life. I mean, one of the things which we all know of, it's very hard to have just a charitable, good faith, political discussion with people nowadays. If they find out a certain thing about you, you're not just wrong, you're like the devil incarnate. It's increasingly hard in our culture to have just a good faith conversation with people because there's this belief of infallibility.

So the Bible has some profound wisdom and help into this human problem of people thinking that they're infallible or movements thinking that they're infallible. The Bible has, believe it or not, some very profound and wise help and it has it in a very surprising way. So we're going to look at the Bible. It's Acts chapter 15. We haven't announced this for a couple of weeks, but one of the things that we're doing, we're preaching through the book of Acts. That's why I'm preaching on this topic today.

We're going to be looking at Acts chapter 15, 35 to following. We've bought these very nice ESV journal Bibles, nice paper, just the text on one side, blank on the other, for people to take notes and ask questions. They're available for you for free up at the front if you want to grab one.

You can even do it now if you want, or you can get it after the service as a gift. And I'm going to be reading from that on page 92. And here's the text. But just before I read the text, it's a really odd text. Not just what Chris read, but a little bit after. It's sort of like, it's as if there's these big sections in the book of Acts and there's a few little detail types of things between these big sections. And

that's what we're going to be looking at. One of those little detail type things.

Because the book of Acts begins with Jesus appearing alive to his disciples and ascending into heaven. And then it moves to this thing called the day of Pentecost. And then we see the early life of Christians and the gospel being accepted by many Jewish people in Jerusalem. And the gospel means trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord. Then we see the start of persecution against Christians.

[ 5 : 30 ] And then we see the gospel making this leap across an ancient divide to Samaritans. And then a little bit after that, we see the gospel making an even bigger leap across an even bigger divide with pagans starting to become Christians. And then we see the gospel really starting to go the very first missionary journey as the gospel goes farther and farther into pagan lands and more Jewish people and Christians farther away become Christians. And that causes a problem which is what just happens just before this.

And a decision is made about what it means for a pagan to become a Christian. And what we're looking at right now is just between that decision that comes at the end of the first missionary journey and the launching of the rest of the book which is going to be two more missionary journeys and Paul's imprisonment and death. And this is how Luke has decided to structure his eyewitness-based account of the first 30 or so years of the Jesus movement. And he wrote it while eyewitnesses are still alive.

So that's sort of where we are with a jumble of things. And here's what's... Actually, before I read it, here's the big idea of these three different... Four different stories that we're going to look at. Four short little stories. If you could put it up, that would be great, Claire. And this is the big idea.

There is a holy mystery in how the infallible, authoritative, life-giving word of the Lord comes to fallible, self-centered, death-doomed human beings, me included. I read it again.

There is a holy mystery in how the infallible, authoritative, life-giving word of the Lord comes to fallible, self-centered, death-doomed human beings, me included. Now, some of you might say, George, whoa, George, one moment. You said the Bible's going to have some helpful wisdom and advice about dealing with people who think they're infallible. Did you hear what you just said?

[ 7 : 35 ] Don't you think if people think that the Bible is infallible, that you're just weaponizing people's sense of infallibility? Like, you've just weaponized the problem. You haven't solved it.

The Bible is weaponizing the problem. And frankly, the whole idea is ridiculous, George, that there could be an infallible word of God. And George, you know, not only is it ridiculous, it's dangerous, it's anything other than, it's just not wise to say something like that.

Well, why am I saying it? Well, let's look at the text. Acts chapter 15, beginning at verse 35. And after, but Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, that's a city in Syria, teaching and preaching, note this, the word of the Lord with many others also.

And after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, let us return and visit the brothers and sisters in every city where we proclaimed, note this, the word of the Lord and see how they are.

So you'll notice here, twice, once each, in each verse, very close together, we have this phrase, the word of the Lord. And the word of the Lord is, if you go back and do a word search, it appears not only like that verbatim many times in the book of Acts, but different synonyms of the same thing appear many, many times in the book of Acts. And in the original language, the word of the Lord has a double meaning. And what it means, it comes from the Old Testament, what our Jewish friends call the Tanakh, and it has this double meaning. It could be translated as saying the word from the Lord, and it could also be translated as saying the word about the Lord. It has a double meaning.

[ 9 : 16 ] It's saying two things, complementary things at the same time, and the original readers and the original hearers would have understood this. And so taking the Old Testament meaning, it is saying literally this, this is a word from God. These are words from the lips, so to speak, I know the triune God doesn't have lips, of the triune God. That's just the book of Acts. This is the whole Bible.

That's what I'm holding in my hands, the actual words of the triune God to human beings. That's what the text is claiming. And it's not just a word from the Lord, it's a word about the Lord. In other words, it's God's words about himself and our relationship to him in light of the fact that he is God. It's saying this double thing at the same time. That's why I said there is a holy mystery of how the infallible authoritative, life-giving word of the Lord comes to fallible, self-centered, death-doomed human beings, me included. That if in fact it is the very words of the Lord, they are infallible. They are authoritative. And it could be that they're death-dealing, but we're going to see in a moment that

they're in fact not death-dealing, that they are in fact life-giving if we receive them in the right type of way. Now, I'm not going to give you any arguments today as to why it's a completely reasonable thing to believe this. I'll just say one thing about it. What I'm going to talk about instead really is why we don't want this to be true. Why hearing that the word of the Lord is infallible and authoritative is something that troubles many, many people. We worry that, well, we worry that it's going to weaponize human tendencies to think, human beings' tendency to think that they're infallible. We worry that it will take away our freedom because it's so authoritative and infallible, that it will overpower us, that it'll take away our freedom, that it will make us do weird things. That's what we worry about. And I'm going to deal with our worries about it.

I'm not going to give you an argument for why it's a reasonable thing. I just want to say this one thing. Words are really important, aren't they? You know, I mean, just, I mean, it's just, on the other hand, it just sounds like the most commonplace thing in the world, but words are how we commit to each other. You know, words like to my wife that I said, well, many, many decades ago, will you marry me? You know, those are life-changing words. Words can wound us. We can, I know people, and probably some of you can think of words that wounded us decades ago, and they still wound us. And words can bless, and words can heal, and words are very, very powerful. So just one little thing to people who are wondering about their place in Christianity or outside of the Christian faith, why is it that most of your understandings, if you're going to have a God at all, is a God that can't speak?

Like, given how important words are, why on earth would you pick a God that can't speak? Like, that God is everywhere, or that God is everything, or that God is some power, some force? How could that be God?

And if a God, if the God that you think might exist, that spiritual power and presence, if it can't speak, how can it hear you? How can it understand? Like, don't you want there to be the case? Doesn't it make sense if there is a God that's worthy of being God, that he must be a God who speaks?

[13:05] And how could he be God and speak and be fallible? That means he's under some other type of standard. Well, how does that solve or help anything?

Just a question. But this claim is being made, and it's the ancient, historic claim, it's the biblical claim, that there is an infallible, that the word of the Lord is infallible and authoritative and life-giving. So, okay, George, you're not going to argue for it, but it still bothers me. I still think it's a dangerous thing.

Well, let's look. The Bible here, here's what's so interesting about the Bible and how wise and helpful the Bible is, that in the same place where it makes clear by saying it twice, close to each other, it then gives a series of stories that help to nuance and reveal ourselves to ourselves. Let's look. You'll see how wise it is. We'll read verse 36 again. And after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, let us return and visit the brothers and sisters in every city where we proclaim the word of the Lord and see how they are.

[14:19] That's the missionary journey that they just got on together, Paul and Barnabas. Verse 37. Now, Barnabas wanted to take with them John, who's also called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

Basically, if you go back to the earlier story, John Mark abandons them when the going got tough. He abandons them. Verse 39. And there arose a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas so that they separated from each other.

Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

And he went through Syria, Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Now, just pause here for a second. This disagreement between Paul and Barnabas is wrong.

And it's heartbreaking. And it's shocking. Some of you who know the Bible a little bit will know that Paul was, in fact, one of the early persecutors of Christians.

[15:33] He consented and aided in the death and murder of early Christians and imprisoned them and beat them. And then he has an encounter with the risen Jesus that completely transforms him.

And he ends up being called by Jesus. He sees Jesus alive. Jesus says, you're going to be my apostle and you're going to do all these things. And Paul becomes a Christian.

Christian and the disciples, the early apostles, are afraid of Paul. They don't believe that he's become a Christian. Who is it, who is it that has listened to Paul and believes him and introduces him to the other apostles and the early Christians?

Who uses, who puts their authority and their reputation on the line? It's Barnabas. And when Paul goes off to, he has to flee because people are after him because he's preaching the gospel. And he spends, you know, quite a few years in a certain region of what we now call Syria, ministering. And who is it who goes and brings him out of the wilderness and brings him back to this very important church in Antioch to be a teacher?

[ 16 : 42 ] It's Barnabas. Who works side by side with Paul for several years in this important church in Antioch? It's Barnabas. Who is it who goes on a missionary journey with Paul, who suffers together and is there when Paul is stoned and people think they've stoned him to death and maybe they have the text is unclear whether Paul is brought back to life or just healed dramatically?

It's Barnabas. And now they have a disagreement over people so strong that they can't work together. This is heartbreaking.

And some of you might say, George, you've just proved my point. Thinking there's an infallible Bible is just going to make it worse. People are going to think they're never wrong. George, you've just proved my point about how dangerous it is.

Well, it's a little bit more subtle than that. We're going to come back to it. But we need to see the next bit before we come back and talk about what's really going, what's going on here. But it's just very, very sad.

Well, what happens next before we come back and look at this a bit more? Look at what happens next. Sort of the opposite thing, but it's also distressing and it touches on many of our deepest fears about dealing with an infallible Bible.

[ 17 : 58 ] Look at what it says. Chapter 16, verse 1. Paul, so they've gone on their missionary journey and sort of, if you're sort of looking at it from this point of view, the original missionary journey, they went from here, down to here, up to here, across from here.

And what Paul and his doing with his new group, he's going to go this way, sort of in reverse order. And so they come, chapter 16, verse 1. Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra.

It was in Lystra that he got stoned by the crowd until he died. A disciple was there named Timothy. A disciple is another way of describing a Christian.

A better way to understand what a Christian is is that a Christian is a disciple of Jesus. It's one of the things I sometimes talk about with people who are outside the Christian faith when they ask me who I am. I say I'm a disciple of Jesus. He's my Lord and Master and my Savior and I'm his disciple. Anyway, a disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer who'd become a Christian, but his father was a Greek, a pagan. Timothy was well spoken of by the brothers and sisters at Lystra and Iconium.

[ 19 : 05 ] Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him. Now notice this. Don't skip over it. Men, let the full weight of these next few words hit you.

Timothy's at least 18, 19, and 20 and there are no anesthetics back then. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him and he took him and circumcised him.

He circumcised him because of the Jewish people who were in those places for they all knew that his father was a Greek, a pagan. And as they went on their way, they, through the cities, they, that's Paul and Timothy and Silas and maybe some others, delivered to people they heard of observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.

So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily. So here's what's really weird about this. Remember, one of our fears is an infallible Bible will cause us to do weird things and hurtful things.

And this, once again, people say, George, you're proving my point why we don't want to have an infallible Bible. Like, it's making Timothy do weird and hurtful things.

[ 20 : 22 ] I don't want to get anywhere near an infallible Bible and have to do these weird things. And it's even weirder because, at first glance, because the decision that they're telling everybody about is that if you become a, if you're a pagan who becomes a Christian, you don't have to be circumcised.

That's actually the decision. Go back and read it in Acts chapter 15. So people are going like, George, this is just crazy talk. Like, here Paul goes and says, you don't have to be circumcised and

Timothy gets circumcised.

What on earth is going on? Well, let's, now we need to go back and sort of tease out what's going on. Remember I said that there is a holy mystery in how the infallible, authoritative, life-giving word of the Lord comes to fallible, self-centered, death-doomed human beings, me included.

A holy mystery. So here's the first thing. If you could put up A, that would be great. It's part of the deep structure of the Bible. It's such a, part of the deep structure of the Bible so that you might not even notice it, but it forms you at an unconscious level while you read it.

Only Jesus is sinless, therefore, only he can save. Only Jesus is sinless, therefore, only he can save. Paul and Barnabas are revealed as sinning.

[ 21 : 44 ] It's going to be my way or the highway. My way or the highway. Okay? We want highway because you're not going my way. Peter is revealed in other places in the Bible as a sinner.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, I apologize to my Roman Catholic friends, this is maybe a bit of a shock, but Mary is revealed as one who sins. That's what the Bible says. Old Testament, all the way through, James, one of the half-brother of Jesus, revealed as one who sins.

All, and here we see this. You go all the way through the Bible, you read from Genesis chapter 1, verse 1, all the way to the end of the book of Revelation, there's only one person who never sins, and that's Jesus. Only one who never sins.

It's Jesus. It's part of the deep structure of the Bible. And, you know, part of, when I just said to you, part of the mystery about this, why is Timothy, we're going to get to that in a moment, why is Timothy being circumcised when the elders and the apostles in Jerusalem make a formal decree that pagan men who become Christians don't have to get circumcised and they don't have to follow what our Jewish friends call the tenacity, back in what we call the Old Testament.

Why did they say that? It's because they understood what Jesus said time and time and time and time again of this. In fact, they probably even go back, if you go back and you read the Gospel of John, a historical account of Jesus, you'll see the very, very, very first time any of the apostles or disciples meet Jesus is when John the Baptist points at this guy walking and, you know, you just think about this, make it realistic.

[ 23 : 22 ] They see Jesus, his hair would not look like a Hollywood person. Maybe it looked like a Hollywood person trying to represent, I don't know, like after the zombie apocalypse. You know, I mean, his hair would have been a bit untidy and he maybe had a little bit of pita bread in his beard, you know, some parsley in his beard and John the Baptist says, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And what they know that they've come to understand is that you go back and you read the Tanakh and you understand that Jesus says that every single sacrifice that is required in the Old Testament is fulfilled in me.

All of the moral laws that nobody was able to keep, I fulfilled them all. All of the promises in the Old Testament that have been made by God, I fulfilled them all. All of the types and images in the Old Testament, I fulfilled them all.

All of the rituals, I fulfilled them all. All of the religious obligations, all of the affection that is required, all of these things, I fulfill them all.

And if you go back and you read the book of Leviticus and this helps us to understand a very deep truth that we understand, we understand the need for sacrifice and you go back and you read the book of Leviticus, you'll see that the way Leviticus begins is a way to give you one of the two keys to everything going on in what we call the Old Testament but it's also what goes on in all religions, which all religions and spiritualities understand some type of a need for sacrifice.

[ 24 : 51 ] I just watched that summer block buster Twisters and it requires a sacrifice. It's seen as a high virtue and it begins with, you say that you bring the animal, an innocent animal that's done nothing wrong and the person who's offering the sacrifice puts their hands on the head of the animal and the image there is that that animal is going to stand for the human being and that in a sense all of my wrongdoing, all of things that make me out of whack with God, all of my shame, all of those things, all of that, that's laid on the hand of the innocent animal and that it takes my place and the innocence, in a sense, in a sense comes to me and that's why you see it's part of the deep structure.

That's why I say the infallible word, the word of the Lord is not just a word from God, it's also a word about God and what God has done about our relationship with him and it reveals that Jesus is the sinless man and he fulfills all of these things that the entire Old Testament is required of and he dies

in my place.

When I put my faith and trust in Jesus, when you put your faith and trust in Jesus, that is the same thing as putting, it's like you put your hand in him, you give yourself to him and all of the wrongdoing, all of the times I should have done what was right and I didn't do it, all of my times when I arrogantly thought that I was infallible and never wrong, all of the hurt that I've done, all of the shame that I feel, all of the uncleanness that I feel, all of the things that I've done to wound others and how I've wounded myself, all of those things are laid on him and he takes my place and deals with all of the consequences that are required and all that's required to put that right, that is all laid on him and he gives me the standing of being sinless.

That is why only a sinless man can be the savior, a sinless person, in this case a man, the second Adam. Only Jesus is sinless, therefore only he can save you.

That is so life-giving. It's not just life-giving in terms of eternal life, it's life-giving in terms of our daily life. It is a burden that crushes you to think you're infallible.

[ 27 : 26 ] It is a burden that crushes you to think that you don't do wrong. It is what drives us to lie. It's what drives us to alcohol and drugs.

It's what drives us to pornography. It's what drives us to arrogance and bullying, the inability to acknowledge that we are not right, that we have done wrong, that we're not infallible.

It drives us to that and to come to one who saves us, to come to know that there is something infallible, that it's not us, and to know it in the context of one who loves you so much that he dies for you, it begins to say, okay, I was wrong about that.

Okay, yes, that was my, I am ashamed of that. I can acknowledge I'm wrong. I can acknowledge I've done things that are wrong.

It provides that context for us to be free. It's why it's life-giving. Now, what about that weird story, though, about the fight, George, and the circumcision?

[ 28 : 42 ] Like, those are still weird. Like, that's very interesting to hear that it's part of the deep structure of the Bible, and it's helping us to understand something important about Jesus and something very important about us.

Well, remember I said the overarching story is that there is a holy mystery in how the infallible, authoritative, life-giving word of the Lord comes to fallible, self-centered, death-doomed human beings, me included.

And what we can see by looking at this argument between them and the circumcision is this. If you could put up B, that would be helpful, Claire. The word of the Lord comes into you for your good and his glory without turning you into his puppet.

You still sin, yet sacrificial love blooms in you as well. That's partly what's the mystery about human beings and how we change in Christ. Right?

He doesn't turn us into his puppet. Grace comes in to perfect our freedom, not to remove our freedom. It is for freedom that Christ died for us. And so, it's part of this mystery.

[ 29 : 51 ] Well, in heaven, we'll understand why it was for our good, that there are still parts of me, and I've been a Christian since I was 16 years old, and you can tell by my hair that was more than just a few years ago that I was 16.

And there's parts of me that the sin is just really hard to deal with, yet at the other time, that's not the only thing about me. There is also things about me and things about you where sacrificial love blooms.

See, we see it in the double story. Paul needs Jesus as his savior. Paul needs Jesus as his savior. And at the same time, why is Timothy, why is Timothy doing this?

Why is Timothy, an 18, 19, 20-year-old man with no anesthetic, willing to get circumcised? Because he loves Jewish people.

He loves Jewish people. And he wants to remove any barrier that would stop them from having him spend time with him and tell him about Jesus.

[ 31 : 00 ] And if that means he has to be circumcised, he'll get circumcised as a sacrifice of love because he wants Jewish people to know Jesus as their savior and Lord.

That's why he does it. He knows he doesn't have to, but he wants to because he loves Jewish people. You see, there's this mystery about God's work in our lives as the infallible word and as Jesus becomes more real to us as our savior that there are some things, friends, brothers and sisters, if Jesus doesn't tarry, there's some sin in your life that you're going to have to struggle with

for 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 years, always struggling with it.

There'll be some great victories you have over it. You'll blow some people away with how you've changed and there's this act of sacrificial love that characterizes you in some areas of your life. And it's a mystery about how God works in us, but God's at work in you if you've given your life to Christ. That's the great, profound promise. And there's one other thing about these two stories and then we'll just close very briefly with this next little story that comes after that, which you could put up this, Claire.

It's God's infallible word does not make you infallible. Okay? God's infallible word does not make you infallible. It just stands to reason.

[ 32 : 30 ] You can't have two infallible sources. It would be like having two irresistible forces. You can't have two irresistible forces in the universe. You can only have one infallible source. You can't have a second one.

God's infallible word does not make you infallible. It humbles you to accept that you are fallible.

Now, it's not seen directly in this text, but it's seen indirectly in this text.

If you... It's not on the screen because I forgot to send it to Claire. But most people agree that the last part of what we now call the Bible was a letter that Paul wrote to Timothy and he wrote it to Timothy just shortly before he dies.

He knows that this time there's not going to be any miraculous escape from his life here. I can't find it when I'm looking for it in a rush. He knows that there's not going to be any miraculous escape this time and he knows he's doing hard time in a dungeon and he knows he's going to die a martyr's death.

And by the way, one of the things he's going to die for, he dies for a fact. He could have saved his life if he just said, okay, I was kidding, Jesus didn't rise from the dead.

[ 33 : 38 ] Ha ha, joke's on you. I didn't really mean it. Didn't rise. If he had said that, he would have got out of jail. But he's not going to deny a fact that he saw Jesus risen.

But look what he says right towards the end of his life. 2 Timothy 4 verse, I think it's verse 11. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you for he is very useful to me for ministry.

And it's not just at the end of his life, but if you go back and go searching, you'll see that somewhere after this, Paul realizes that he was wrong. He's not infallible.

And Paul and Mark reconcile. You see, friends, God's infallible word does not make you infallible, but it humbles you to accept that you are fallible.

And it humbles you in another way. We'll look at that very briefly in the final story in these final minutes of the sermon. Look with me in verse 6. Because you see, the fact of the matter is that some people take this text to mean this idea of the infallible Bible means all I need is the Bible and me.

[ 34 : 57 ] It's all I need. I don't need you. I don't need to hear what people wrote about 100 years ago or 500 years ago or 1,000 years ago. All I need is this and me.

I've met lots of people like that. I've suffered under some people like that. But that's not what the Bible teaches. Look at the next story.

Verse 6 of chapter 16. And they went through the region of Phrygia. So verse 5 says, so the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily. That's what we should be praying for our church so we grow in numbers, that each person grows in their faith and that the church grows in numbers.

It's what we should be praying for every ministry in the church. That people involved in the ministry, you know, the men's group or the women's group, that they grow and they strengthen their faith and that the ministries grow. We should be praying for our missionaries that they grow in the faith and that we have more missionaries.

That's a Christian way to pray. To not pray for growth is to miss how to pray. But verse 6, and they went through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia having, note this, been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word, short for the word of the Lord, in Asia.

[ 36 : 11 ] And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. Two times in a row the Spirit says no.

So passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. Now just pause here. The Bible doesn't make clear how it is that the Holy Spirit says no. But this isn't just a simple no once.

They walked 400 miles, 640 kilometers of walking with a regular no of the Holy Spirit. 640 kilometer walk.

Pushing them in one direction. They can't go this way, they can't go this way, they can't go this way, they're going to go this way. We want to go up there, no. Want to go down there, no. Want to go up there, no.

Want to go down there, no. No, no, no, no, no. Then verse 9. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia was standing there urging him and saying, come over to Macedonia and help us.

[ 37 : 18 ] Paul knows that the help they need is they need to hear the word of the Lord. The best help we can give to any human being is to tell them about Jesus. And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

And you'll notice there that the word we shows up, that Luke, the writer of this, is now actually part of the story. But here's the thing, in the original language, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them, it doesn't mean that Paul just said, whoa, I have this vision, you guys all have to come along.

Concluding implies there was sustained conversation amongst the brothers to discern what God had called them to do. It wasn't just, I got my Bible and I got God and I just do whatever I bloody well want because I think I'm infallible.

No, here's, can you put up the point? Since you are not infallible, you need to learn his infallible word with the help of the Holy Spirit and other Christ followers.

So I'm, you know, I'm broadening out the general point of the text, which is just this, that they needed the Holy Spirit. They needed God's help and direction.

[ 38 : 39 ] But they also needed conversation with their brothers. And you could add to make it more extensive, brothers and sisters. And you could add for us as a general thing as I need help when I read the Bible from people who lived a hundred years ago.

I want to tell you right now, if you want to get, if you just want to buy some commentaries on the Gospels, you cannot beat getting J.C. Ryle's commentaries on the Gospels.

And he wrote them in the 18th hundreds. And they're absolute dynamite. We need help from earlier generations of Christians.

It's a good thing if you discover what Augustine or Chrysostom said. It's a good thing if you discover what Ambrose or Basil the Great or Calvin or Luther said. It's a good thing to learn from brothers and sisters from the past.

And it's a good thing to consult with other brothers and sisters today, to be part of a local church, to be part of a men's ministry or a women's ministry or a youth group or a small group, to come to church, to together hear the word of the Lord and discuss what it means trusting in the help of the Holy Spirit.

[ 39 : 45 ] That's, there is a holy mystery in how the infallible, authoritative, life-giving word of the Lord comes to fallible, self-centered, death-doomed human beings, me included.

And we not only need the word of the Lord, we need the Holy Spirit. We need conversation amongst us. Brothers and sisters, that's what we need. Please stand. I invite you to stand.

Just as you're standing, if there's any here or any who are watching, live or down the stream, is the word of the Lord is for you. I've just tried to tell you what the Bible teaches, not on my own authority, but I have consulted with other brothers, in this case, you know, mainly brothers.

Throughout my life, I've learned from brothers and sisters, and I've studied, and I try to open the word for you, and this is a word of the Lord for you, that Jesus died for you. He wants to be your Savior and your Lord.

And if you just say, Jesus, I want you to be my Savior and Lord, he's alive. He will hear it. He will answer it. He will come into your life. You come into his life and what he's done.

[ 40 : 56 ] There is no shame, so shameful, that he will not embrace you. There is no sin, so highness, that he has not paid for it. There is no woundedness or brokenness that is so bad and so longstanding that he cannot overcome it.

He sees you as you are, and he loves you. He died for you. He'd like to be your Savior and your Lord. He will welcome you. Let's pray.

Father, you know how we believe we're infallible. And you know, Father, how each one of us can be blind to that.

And you know, Father, how we're a lot better at seeing in other people than we are at seeing in ourselves. And Father, we ask that your work of grace in our lives would continue so that we would have the freedom to lift this huge crushing burden of infallibility from us, to know and trust that only your word is infallible because it comes from you who are infallible and authoritative.

So we ask, Father, that you help us to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest your word. We ask that you help us to engage in humble, good faith conversations with other Christians that we might grow and learn and be ministered to and ministered to others.

[ 42 : 26 ] That you would grow us as a church and in all of our ministries, Father, where we're strengthened in the faith and we grow in numbers, Father, all for our good and your glory. And we ask all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior, and all God's people said, Amen.

Let's just be seated. The service has been shortened. We're going to go into, but just before we do announcements, I'd like to say a couple of prayers. I know people have to go to the bathroom and all that's good, but we need to say a couple of prayers before we go into, I'll do the announcements and then we'll set the table for the Lord's Supper.

Some of you might know there's a very momentous day happening in a couple of days in the United States of America. It would be wrong if we didn't pray for our friends south of the border. So let's just pray for that and a couple of other things as well.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer and yeah, let's just pray. Father, we thank you. We thank you that we get to live beside the United States of America and there are many things about that country that are great and of course, many things about it, that country that they need to repent of and that are worrisome.

We ask, Father, that you would have mercy on our friends to the south, that in your mercy you would grant them a government better than they deserve, that you would raise up men and women despite whatever rhetoric they might say now, that you would move their hearts and move their wills, that they would seek the true good of that whole nation, the true prosperity of all the people in that nation and that they would be a force of good in the world.

[ 44 : 07 ] Father, we ask that you would, that regardless of who wins and who loses, that you would work in the hearts of the winners, that that would be the result. And Father, we ask for ourselves who will be having an election before we know it as well, that you will have mercy on us, that you give us leaders better than we deserve.

Father, we also pray for the other gospel-hearted, gospel-centered churches in this city. We ask that you grow the bonds of affection between our churches, that you would help us all to thrive in proclaiming Jesus.

We thank you for the missionaries that we support and missionaries who are part of our congregation. We think of those involved in outreach to international students at Ottawa U, and we think of our brother here preparing to go to Asia to work once again as a missionary, and the other missionaries that we support around the world in North Africa and in South America and in the rest of Africa.

The missionaries that we're about to support as well, ministering to Afghanistan and in Kuwait.

Father, we ask your blessing upon these missionaries, and we ask that you increase our generosity towards these really important works.

And Father, we ask that you bless those who still work in the public square, whether it's in the civil service or whether it's in private industry or in the arts or education.

[ 45 : 31 ] We ask, Father, that you help them to work well for your glory, grant them wisdom and discernment, how they can speak into their places of work and their places of influence in a way that's good and true and just and merciful and wise so that our city and our nation will thrive.

And for all of us, Father, we ask that you help us to have a winsome, humble courage, to share the gospel. Help us to recognize opportunities to share the gospel. And Father, we all have loved ones that we are praying will come to a saving faith in Jesus.

And we ask, Father, that you would bring our loved ones to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.