

“When Things Don’t Go According to Plan”

The Church on Fire: Part

Acts 15:36–41; January 20th, 2009

Kevin Maples; Dorsett Shoals Baptist Church

Steinbeck wrote: “Even *the best made plans of mice and men* oft go awry”

1. The plan to follow up, 15:36

- a. Paul’s plan was for him and Barnabas to follow up with the new converts in order to disciple them.
- b. Model Characteristics of Paul’s plan
 - i. *Ambitious*
 1. Paul was a hard worker.
 - a. He had just finished a major journey and now he was ready to go again.
 - b. For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 1 Thess 2:9 (ESV)
 2. The Bible teaches that we should be diligent workers.
 - a. If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 2 Thess 3:10 (ESV)
 - ii. *Selfless*
 1. Paul’s concern was for the welfare of the new believers.
 - a. there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. 2 Cor 11:28 (ESV)
 2. The Bible teaches this selfless service
 - a. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Phil 2:4 (ESV)
 - iii. *Responsible*
 1. Paul was not just an evangelist, he was a discipler.
 - a. And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Col 1:9-10 (ESV)
 - b. Paul poured his life into young men like Timothy and Titus.
- c. The problem then was not the plan.
 - i. Just because you experience difficulties doesn’t mean you’ve made a bad choice.
 - ii. *2 Common reasons why plans go wrong:*
 1. They often involve people.

- a. bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. Col 3:13-14 (ESV)
- 2. God has other plans.
 - a. And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸ So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 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." ¹⁰ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. Acts 16:6-10 (ESV)

2. The obstacle in the plan, 15:37–38

- a. John Mark had lost his credibility
 - i. Now Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem, ¹⁴ but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. Acts 13:13-14 (ESV)
 - ii. *The loss of credibility is a consequence of both sin and irresponsibility.*
 - 1. You don't deserve trust, you can't demand trust, you must earn trust.
- b. Barnabas and Paul had two different temperaments
 - i. Barnabas was predominately an encourager
 - 1. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), Acts 4:36 (ESV)
 - ii. Paul was highly disciplined and had so sympathy for slackers.
- c. Paul and Barnabas had two different relationships with John Mark.
 - i. Mark the cousin of Barnabas Col 4:10 (ESV)

3. The result of the conflict, 15:39–41

- a. Two teams went out instead of one
 - i. Not every split is a bad thing.
- b. Mark later proves himself and is reunited with Paul
 - i. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. 2 Tim 4:11 (ESV)
- c. Mark becomes Peter's son in the ministry
 - i. She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. 1 Peter 5:13 (ESV)
- d. Mark writes one of the four Gospels.