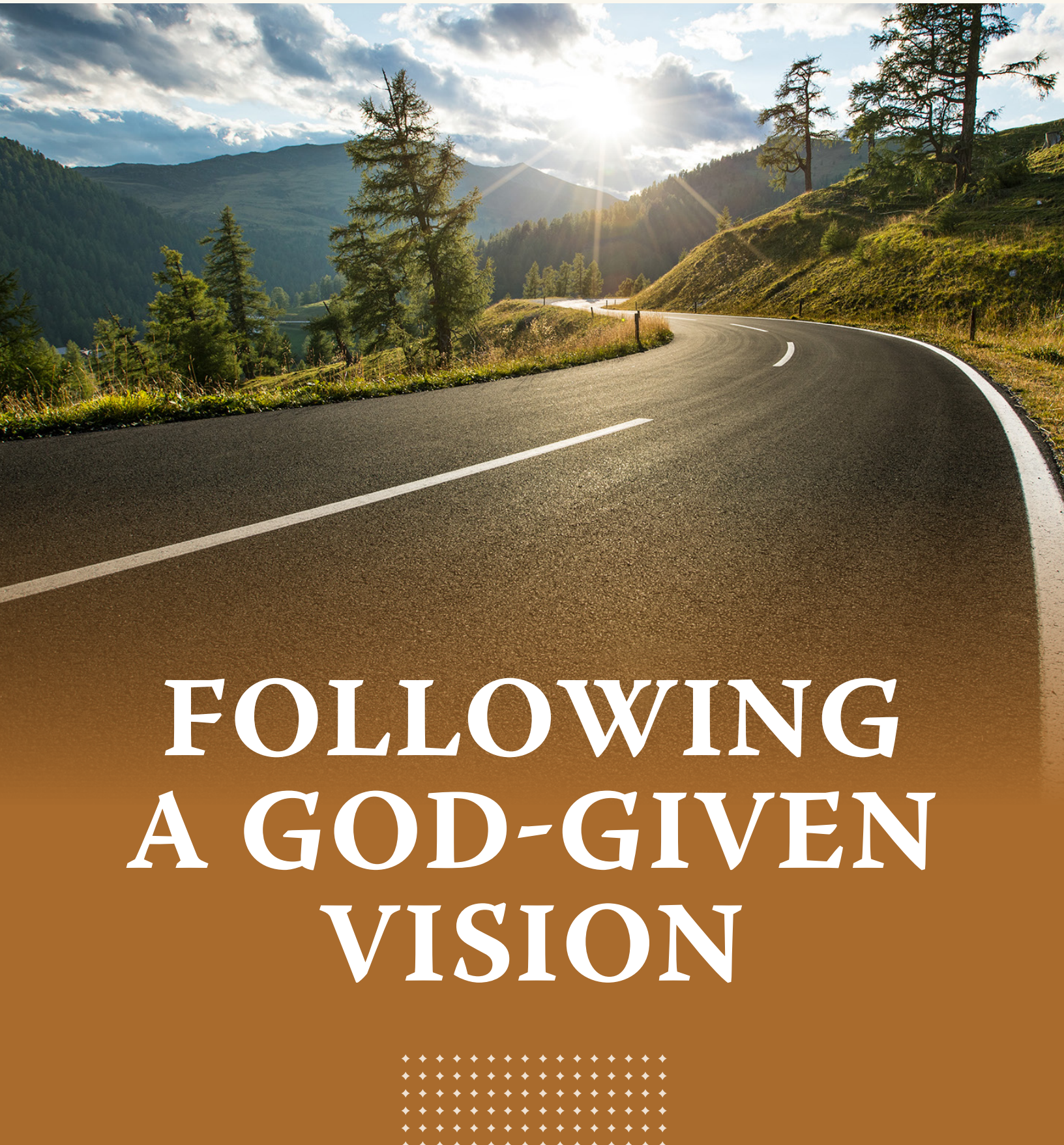




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FOLLOWING A GOD-GIVEN VISION



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Text: Acts 16:6-12

Introduction:

Every Christian leader and every Christ-centered church knows the importance of a God-given vision. It gives spiritual enlightenment on the journey and empowerment in the battle. A clear vision also gives certainty not only about what is today but what can be tomorrow. The apostle Paul knew firsthand the power of vision, as time after time God instilled in his heart and illuminated in his mind the path that lay ahead. We can gain much and be greatly encouraged by his experience, as we are reminded that God directs us just as surely today. This passage Acts 16:6-12, shows us three elements of a godly vision: the Call, the Way and the Goal.

I. The Call.

A. Paul's call from God on this occasion was preceded by a "no."

1. A "no" to the areas in which the Gospel was not yet to be proclaimed. (16:7)
2. A "no" that reminds us how God protects His children from Wrong paths.
3. God's "no" often comes as a quiet but persistent inner voice.
4. God's "no" in this case was not a final "no." In later years, the provinces of Asia did indeed receive the Gospel.

B. Paul's call from God included an emphatic "yes."

1. A "yes" to the areas to which God wanted His word to go. (16:9)
2. A "yes" which reminded Paul that he could only work effectively where God had prepared the way.
3. A "yes" which said that it was the right time and the right place, not because intellect or careful plans said so, but because God had called.
 - a. Paul was called and directed through a divine vision.
 - b. Paul made a key decision based upon the vision. (16:10)

II. The Way.

A. Where there is a Call, there is also a Way.

1. This does not mean that the way will be easy or without danger.
2. This does mean that when God calls, and the believer (or church) obeys, God leads to the goal He has set.

B. The Way was a hazardous one.

3. The straight course to Samothrace from Troas is feared even by sailors today. (16:11)
4. To travel across those dangerous waters in two days proved that God had prepared the way.

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III. The Goal.

A. When God calls and prepares the way, He also leads to the right goal.

1. The first goal was the city of Philippi, the leading city of the province.
2. Philippi was to become a hinge point in history.

B. When one obeys God's call and goes the way He has prepared, God gives success.

1. In Philippi, there would be great obstacles, but great opportunities as well.
2. In Philippi, a Roman colony in the middle of Greece, the message of God's kingdom would invade Caesar's kingdom.

Conclusion:

Fulfillment of the God-given vision would be a formidable challenge. But the challenge would be met and God would be glorified. How interesting this is when we consider that Paul later wrote to the Philippian believers that he was "confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus". (Phil. 1:6) The vision did not die. It was passed on through the lives of untold, unnamed believers who also heard the Call, followed the Way, and reached the Goal- the prize for which God has called us heavenward. (Phil. 3:14)

