

Acts

Part 42 – The Gospel Marches On

Acts 16:1-15

Having separated from each other, Paul and Barnabas advance the gospel in different directions. Taking with him Silas, Paul's original plan was to travel back through Asia Minor in order to strengthen the churches there. However, God had different plans. Indeed, God's plan was far more expansive. Traveling to the region of Galatia they pick up a replacement for John Mark named Timothy the son of a Jewish mother and Gentile father. From there they desired to travel into the province of Asia or into Bithynia. But God closed doors into both regions. Instead, the Lord directed them to Troas, a northern port on the Aegean Sea. While there God gave Paul a miraculous vision directing him to take the gospel to Macedonia.



The mission to Macedonia quite literally changed the world for it signaled the gospel's advance into Europe. The world would never be the same.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey:

1. Paul and Silas leave Syrian Antioch and travel through Syria and into Cilicia (Acts 15:36-41).
2. They worked in Derbe and Lystra, where Timothy was recruited to join them. They travel on to Iconium where they experienced success (Acts 16:1-5).
3. They passed through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia because the Holy Spirit would not let them go to Asia. In Mysia the Spirit changed their plans again and sent them to Troas (Acts 16:6-8).
4. Having traveled further than previously, Paul received a vision calling him to Macedonia (Acts 16:9-12).
5. The conversion of Lydia (Acts 16:13-15).
6. They deliver a slave girl of her evil spirit and are thrown into prison (Acts 16:16-24).
7. Their jailer is converted (Acts 16:25-34).
8. They are released from prison with some embarrassment to the authorities (Acts 16:35-40).
9. Next they go to Thessalonica, preach in the synagogue and make converts. But some Jews make trouble (Acts 17:1-9).
10. Paul and Silas are sent by night to Berea. Working in Berea, they find ready minds to receive the gospel. But the trouble makers arrive and Paul is taken to Athens to avoid them (Acts 17:10-15).
11. Paul preaches in Athens (Acts 17:16-34).
12. Paul traveled Corinth, where he met Aquila and Priscilla and was joined again by Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:1-5).
13. In Corinth they experienced trouble from the Jews (Acts 18:6-17).
14. Paul sets sail to go back to Syria. From Corinth he traveled to Ephesus where he stayed only a short time (Acts 18:18-21).
15. Paul took a ship to Caesarea visiting the church there. He returned to Syrian Antioch (Acts 18:22).

Main Idea: As God's people go about advancing the gospel He will guide them and add His power to their faithful witness.

1. The gospel marches on through wise and faithful witness.

- **Vv. 1-2** – John Mark's absence is filled by a young disciple named Timothy who would become Paul's son in the faith.
- **Vs. 3** – A wonderful example of Paul's principle of being all things to all men so that he might win some. In circumcising Timothy, Paul was removing an *unnecessary* stumbling block to the Jews. Timothy was half-Jewish. So, circumcising him did not betray the principle of free grace and, while not necessary, did lessen the difficulty for Jewish Christians and potential converts. However, when it came to the judaizer's demands that Gentile Christians be circumcised in order to be made right with God, Paul would not budge. That is, for a Gentile to be circumcised on the grounds suggested by the judaizers would be to embrace a different gospel (**Gal. 5:2-4**).
- **Vs. 4** – The first part of their journey was to deliver to the churches the good news from the Jerusalem council.
- **Vs. 5** – This is the fourth such summary statement following those of 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; and like those we will see in 19:20 and 28:30-31. The gospel of God's free grace in Jesus Christ is the message which both establishes and strengthens the church. The affirmation of the gospel was also accompanied with the call to holiness which also serves to strengthen the church. The gospel and its accompanying call to allegiance to Christ produced a spiritual vitality that bore the fruit of numeric growth.

2. The gospel marches on through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

- The next phase in the journey highlights God's sovereign direction of His servants.
- **Vv. 6-8** – It is not clear how this guidance was accomplished. It may have been through direct revelation or simply the conclusion reached based upon their circumstances.
- **Vs. 9** – It is clear that Paul is describing a miraculous vision. It is not important that we know who this Macedonian man is. The event points to God's sovereign direction in taking the gospel to where it has not yet been proclaimed.
- **Vs. 10** – Notice the shift to "we." Luke is present as an eyewitness. This manner of speaking extends to 16:17 and then resumes again in 20:5. This is important evidence both of Luke's authorship and of Acts' eyewitness authority.

3. The gospel marches on through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **Vs. 13** – Apparently there was no synagogue in Philippi. You had to have ten Jewish males to have a synagogue. But there was a place where people associated with Judaism -- God-fearers -- typically met. And here Paul met some women on the Sabbath day.
- **Vs. 14** – As Paul preached the Lord granted Lydia the new birth. That is, God opened her heart to believe the gospel. Earlier Luke wrote of God "granting repentance" (**11:18**; see also **3:26**), of God "opening the door of faith" (**14:27**), and those believing who had been "appointed to eternal life" (**13:48**).
- The truth is expressed in many ways throughout the Scriptures. Jesus spoke of believers as those who are drawn by the Father (**John 6:37-40**) and Paul wrote of light illuminating darkened hearts (**2 Cor 4:4-6**), of those chosen long before time (**Eph 1:4**), and the rebirth (**Titus 3:5**). However it is expressed the truth is that the salvation of sinners depends upon the sovereign, electing grace of God.
- **Vs. 15** – The credibility of Lydia's faith was immediately demonstrated in her actions. She and the members of her household were baptized. She also demonstrated gracious hospitality to Paul and his companions. It is not insignificant that God's "welcome home" to Lydia was followed by her "welcome home" to Paul.