

15:36-18:23 - Paul's Second Missionary Journey (part 1)

15:36 *After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."*

15:37 *Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.*

15:38 *But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia*

15:39 *And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.*

15:40 *But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.*

15:41 *And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.*

Verses 36 and following happen "after some days" ("some time later" – NIV), perhaps after winter when travel became more feasible (Stott, 253).

After the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:4-29) Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch where they agreed that they should go back and re-visit the churches in Galatia (Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe) that they had established on their missionary endeavors (Acts 14). Barnabas wanted to take his cousin, John Mark, who had accompanied them during their first trip, but returned to Jerusalem part way through (Acts 13:13). Paul viewed John Mark's lack of perseverance as desertion and didn't want to see the same fall-out repeated. The disagreement was so sharp that Paul and Barnabas parted company; Barnabas wanted to give Mark a second chance so he took Mark and sailed to his own hometown in Cyprus while Paul took Silas with him and traveled through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Paul's travels this time were by foot walking over a narrow pass in the Tarsus mountains known as the 'Cilician gates' (Stott, 253).

The Bible nowhere tries to hide the weaknesses, failings, and sins of His people. This is one of the virtues of Scripture that separates it from other religious documents and even secular history. We can see in this that the sin nature remains even in the most godly people. All of us can be windows of access into the church that can allow Satan to do his work. However, in spite of sin God used the dissention to multiply His missionary efforts; two teams left Antioch to encourage the churches. But God also brought reconciliation. In 2 Timothy 4:11 Paul said to Timothy, "Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service" (also see Col. 4:10). Somewhere, the two had been reconciled by the grace of God; Paul did not hold a grudge and Mark had become a changed person. Jesus Christ is full of grace; He specializes in restoring failures.

Paul in Derbe and Lystra – Acts 16:1-5

16:1 *Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek,*

16:2 *and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.*

16:3 Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

16:4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.

16:5 So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

Please see the map below to see Paul's travel route.

Paul approached Lystra and Derbe from the east so Derbe is listed first. These were the last towns he visited on his first missionary journey.

The most notable event takes place in Lystra where Paul meets Timothy who, presumably along with his mother, had been saved earlier when Paul had preached in that city (1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 1:3 cf. 2 Tim. 3:15). Because Timothy "was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium," Paul wanted him to join his missionary team.

Timothy's father was a Greek who was probably dead at the time and his mother was a Jewess (named Eunice, 2 Tim. 1:5; his grandmother, Lois, was a believer). Since Timothy hadn't been circumcised, Paul circumcised him "because of the Jews who were in those parts" (16:3) who would assume he was uncircumcised because they knew his father. This caused considerable controversy since Paul had earlier written to the churches in Galatia and had regarded circumcision with indifference (Gal. 5:6), and even forbade the Gentiles from being circumcised lest they view it as a meritorious work (Gal. 2:3-5). Here, however, the circumstances are different. Timothy was considered a Jew (because his mother was a Jew) – but an illegitimate one since he lacked the mark of covenant belonging (circumcision; see Marshall about circumcision in mixed marriages, 275). Circumcision removed the stigma that surrounded him and opened doors for him to minister to Jews without causing offense. As Bock says, "Instead of making Timothy a sideshow to the gospel in terms of whether he was circumcised or not, Paul permitted circumcision so that the gospel would remain the main topic. Knowing which principles are worth standing up for and which ideas are not worth elevating to an importance they do not deserve is a sign of discernment and leadership. Not every issue is worth starting a war over when it comes to the gospel and the ethnic unity of the church" (Bock, 524). In Paul's practice, when the issue was the purity of the gospel, he opposed circumcision with every cell in his being; when the issue was how to best reach people with the gospel, he did all that he could to remove barriers (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

"It is really marvelous that, soon after Paul's hot indignation over the Judaizers in Antioch (15:1), and his vehement statement against circumcision in his letter to the Galatians (Gal. 1:6–9; 3:1–5; 5:2–6), he should now be prepared to circumcise Timothy. Little minds would have condemned him for his inconsistency. But there was a deep consistency in his thought and action. Once the principal had been established that circumcision was not necessary for salvation, he was ready to make concessions in policy. What was unnecessary for acceptance with God was advisable for acceptance by some human beings" (Stott, 254).

Paul's call to Macedonia– Acts 16:6-10

16:6 They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;

16:7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

16:8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

The most notable feature of Paul's second missionary journey is that the gospel spreads to Europe. Of course, in Paul's day, they were just traveling from one Roman province to another, but Europe became the main base of missionary outreach in the years to come reaching Africa, Asia, North America, Latin America, and Oceania – so it reached the ends of the earth (Stott, 258).

Please see the map below to see Paul's travel route.

Pisidian Antioch was very close to the border of Asia, so it seemed natural to head in that direction (south-west from Pisidian Antioch), but they were prevented by the Holy Spirit from doing so. Thus, they went north-west until they reached Mysia. From there they tried to enter Bithynia to the north, but were prevented by the Spirit from doing that as well. How or why they were guided by the Holy Spirit is not elaborated upon; however, what is clear is that the only direction left for them to travel was north-west, so that is what they did, skirting Mysia and ending up in Troas.

Proverbs 16:9: The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

16:9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

16:10 When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

While Paul was in Troas he had a vision of a man in Macedonia begging him to come to him. Paul took this as God's leading and headed there.

From verse 10 Luke begins to refer to the group as "we" instead of "they." There is little question that Luke, the doctor and the one who penned the book of Acts, joined the team in Troas.

Paul in Philippi – Acts 16:11-40

16:11 So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;

16:12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.

Samothrace was an island with a peak that reached 5,000 feet at its highest point. The missionary team probably stopped there for the night before traveling to Neapolis. From Neapolis they had a 10 mile walk to Philippi. Macedonia was divided into four districts, and Philippi was the leading city in that district.

16:13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.

16:14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

16:15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Philippi had no synagogue, but they did have a place of prayer (as the missionaries expected there would be) just over a mile outside of the city gate. There were women gathered, but no men; since 10 men were required before a synagogue could be established, the lack of men explains why there wasn't one.

Once invited to speak, Paul shared the gospel and Lydia, from Thyatira (which was renowned for its fine fabrics), responded to it. Lydia was a worshiper of God, but had not converted to Judaism.

Luke is clear that it wasn't Paul's message that caused her to respond, but that the Lord opened her heart to it, an expression synonymous to the birth of faith. It demonstrates the calling of God upon her life. This is an example of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Paul spoke; she heard, but God opened the heart. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (Jn. 6:44). Acts 13:48 says, "When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; *and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*" God's appointment comes first, salvation follows. Acts 14:27 says, "When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they *began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*" God works with men, but God alone opens the door of faith.

She and her household (which would have included her servants and children if she had any) were baptized.

Whenever household baptisms are mentioned in Acts, people want to read into them more than is said. Some see this as baptismal regeneration (the belief that baptism saves you), others see evidence of infant baptism (paedobaptism). For example, some argue that Acts teaches infant baptism since in Acts 10 and 11, Cornelius' household is mentioned and they were baptized. The assumption is that infants were present. This type of interpretation assumes way too much. First, the critical word "infant" doesn't even appear in the text. We have no idea who was included in Cornelius' household. But it should also be noted that the "them" who were baptized in Acts 10:48 are also described as listening to Peter's message (10:44), receiving the Holy Spirit (10:44-47; 11:15-17), speaking in tongues (10:46), and repenting (11:18). One cannot arbitrarily isolate the description of those baptized from the other

descriptions given of the same people. In fact, one could even say that by the description given, Luke never intended that infants be considered as part of those baptized. Likewise, Acts 18:8 states "Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized." This doesn't support infant baptism or baptismal regeneration either. It clearly says that Crispus, his entire household, and many Corinthians believed – then they were baptized. For comments on Acts 16:31-33 see these verses below:

The pattern in the Bible is that repentance (Acts 2:38), reception of the word (Acts 2:41), belief in the gospel (Acts 8:12), reception of the Spirit (Acts 10:47), and belief in Christ (16:31-33) preceded baptism.

16:16 It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

16:17 Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."

16:18 She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

On another Sabbath, Paul and his companions were returning to the place of prayer outside the city. On the way they met a girl possessed with a demon. Literally, she had a 'python-spirit.' The python was the snake that guarded the temple of the mythical god Apollo, as he was thought to embody a snake. Perhaps her behavior imitated the followers of Apollo who was said to give his female followers the gift of clairvoyance (Stott, 264).

The message the girl was proclaiming was true. Paul and the others were bond-servants of the Most High God, who were proclaiming the way of salvation. Of course one would ask, why would a demon want to support the missionary cause? Perhaps the motive was to discredit the gospel by making an association to it with the demonic. Whatever the reason, there can be no alliance between good and evil. The demonic cannot be associated with Paul and the gospel he preached. The woman continued with her proclamation for many days until Paul had had enough and he commanded the spirit to come out which it did immediately.

16:19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,

16:20 and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews,

16:21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."

With the departure of the spirit, the girl lost her ability to tell fortunes and with that her profitability to her masters was gone. Enraged, the girl's owners seized Paul and Silas. They had no real concern for the girl, nor did they rejoice that she was released from the control of the evil spirit; they only saw a loss in profit. So they accused Paul and Silas as Jews who were proclaiming customs which were not lawful for

Romans to accept or to observe. The accusation was that they were inciting a riot and causing the people to disobey the laws of Rome.

16:22 *The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.*

16:23 *When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;*

16:24 *and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

The crowd then joined them in accusing the missionaries, so the magistrates stripped Paul and Silas, had them publically beaten, and thrown into prison.

16:25 *But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;*

“It is wonderful that in such pain, with lacerated backs and aching limbs, Paul and Silas at *about midnight* were praying and singing hymns to God. Not groans but songs came from their mouths. Instead of cursing men, they blessed God. No wonder the other prisoners *were listening to them*” (25) (Stott, 267).

16:26 *and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.*

16:27 *When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.*

16:28 *But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"*

16:29 *And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,*

Some liberal commentators see this as a story of improbabilities, but to those who believe in a sovereign, gracious God the narrative is not unbelievable. Through the earthquake God opened the jailer's heart to faith and caused the release of Paul and Silas as well.

16:30 *and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

16:31 *They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

16:32 *And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.*

16:33 *And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.*

16:34 *And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.*

Belief in Christ is always the answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?”

This is another passage in Acts where we have the baptism of an entire household (see above). Like the previous passage, some Christians see this supporting the notion of infant baptism. There are at least three reasons that argue against this. First, it says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (v. 31). This can only mean if you believe and if your household believes, then you will be saved and those in your household will be saved. It cannot mean if the head of the household believes, the whole household will be saved apart from personal faith in Christ. Secondly, in Acts 16:32 it says, "they spoke the word of the Lord to him *together with all who were in his house.*" When it says *they spoke the word of the Lord*, it means those in the household could understand the content of what was spoken; they understood the gospel. It would be of no significance to "speak the word of the Lord" to a baby who couldn't understand what was being said. In other words, this household consisted of those who could understand the message and believe. Lastly, Acts 16:34 says that the jailer "rejoiced greatly, having believed in God *with his whole household;*" that is, the jailer rejoiced because he and his family had believed in God and were saved.

16:35 Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men."

16:36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace."

16:37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out."

The next morning word was sent to release the prisoners, probably since they assumed that a flogging and a night in prison would have been enough to teach them a lesson. They assumed they would leave quietly. Paul had different ideas. He claimed his rights as a Roman citizen. He had been bound, beaten, and imprisoned without a trial – all of which were illegal by Roman law. Any who violated these basic rights of a Roman citizen would be severely punished. Paul refused to leave unless the magistrates themselves came.

16:38 The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans,

16:39 and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city.

The word reached the magistrates who went immediately to apologize and appealed to them to leave the city. Paul left and went to the house of Lydia.

We can only speculate as to why Paul insisted that the magistrates escort them out instead of just leaving quietly, but one reasonable suggestion is that they wanted to demonstrate that they had not broken the law, but were unjustly treated. They who proclaimed the gospel were not criminals.

16:40 They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Feeling that their mission had been successful and they had been cleared of illegality, the missionary band moved on.

