



Paul Begins His Second Missionary Journey Acts 15:36 - 16:40

Introduction

After leaving the church council in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas had returned to Antioch with two prophets from the Jerusalem church, Judas and Silas. Together they had delivered the council's decision concerning the question of circumcision for the Gentile believers. It was a time of great encouragement and strengthening for the Antioch church. When Judas and Silas returned to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas stayed on in Antioch *teaching and preaching the word of the Lord*.

However, it was not long before Paul began to feel the urge to return to the cities where they had preached the gospel on the first missionary journey. His heart had a longing to see how the new believers were doing and the Holy Spirit was nudging him to set out again on his mission to the Gentiles. When Paul proposed to Barnabas that they revisit the churches they had planted, a disagreement arose over whether they should take John Mark with them. The result was a parting of the ways as Barnabas took John Mark and sailed to Cyprus and Paul enlisted Silas to join him for the trip back to the churches of Asia Minor. From this point on, Barnabas is not mentioned again in Acts and Paul's ministry becomes the focus of Luke's narrative. Although it is disheartening to see two pillars of the church in sharp disagreement, God used even the discord between Paul and Barnabas to promote the spread of the gospel: instead of one missionary journey departing from Antioch now there were two, John Mark was given a second chance and encouragement by Barnabas and Silas was added to the missionary ministry.

As the Holy Spirit led the way for Paul and Silas, new missionaries were recruited and new lands were evangelized. *What began as a follow-up visit to areas already evangelized became, under the Spirit's direction, a full-scale campaign that took Paul and Silas temporarily out of Asia Minor and across the Aegean Sea into Macedonia and Greece where they established churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth* (Acts, I. Howard Marshall).

Outline of Acts 15:36-16:40

- I. Paul and Barnabas Part Ways - Acts 15:36-41
- II. Paul Returns to Asia Minor - Acts 16:1-5
- III. Paul is Called to Macedonia - Acts 16:6-10
- IV. Paul Ministers in Philippi - Acts 16:11-40

I. Paul and Barnabas Part Ways - Acts 15:36-41

Barnabas had been a great encourager to Paul (9:26-27 and 11:25-26) and the two had been a fruitful team both in the church at Antioch and on the first missionary campaign. The partnership, however, was not to last.

A. Desire to revisit Gentile churches - Acts 15:36

Paul had a missionary's heart and an energetic spirit which did not rest for long in one place. His love and concern for *our brethren in every city* led him to suggest to Barnabas that they go back and visit the cities where they had preached the gospel. Apparently Barnabas was ready and willing to go, but a problem arose.

B. Dispute over John Mark - Acts 15:37-39a

John Mark was Barnabas' cousin (Colossians 4:10), and even though he had left the previous missionary venture and returned home, Barnabas wanted to give him another chance. Paul, however, was strongly opposed. The disagreement became an angry dispute and the two church leaders parted ways. Barnabas, the encourager, was concerned about his relative and was eager to mentor the younger man. Paul, on the other hand, was concerned with the ministry and didn't want to take a chance on a man who may not have been one hundred percent committed to the task. It's difficult to say if one was right and the other wrong. Both had valid arguments. The important thing is that the rift was later healed. Paul mentions Barnabas in 1 Corinthians 9:6 in a positive light and in 2 Timothy 4:11 he refers to John Mark as being *useful to me for ministry*.

C. Departures - Acts 15:39b-41

Paul and Barnabas had not been separated by persecution from the unbelieving Jews or by the legalistic demands of the Judaizers, but they were separated as the result of a personal disagreement. Barnabas took John Mark and sailed to Cyprus, returning to encourage the churches which had been established in his homeland. Paul sent for Silas and the two set out for Asia Minor, traveling through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches. Perhaps they stopped in Paul's hometown of Tarsus as they passed through Cilicia.

II. Paul Returns to Asia Minor - Acts 16:1-5

Traveling into the area Paul had evangelized on the first

missionary journey, they visited the cities of Derbe and Lystra.

A. Timothy chosen - Acts 16:1-3

Timothy was held in high esteem by the members of the church in Asia Minor. Paul must have also been impressed with the young man because he invited Timothy to join the missionary group.

Timothy's mother was Jewish and had raised him in the knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15). However, because his father was Greek, Timothy had not been circumcised. *As a man professing adherence to the Jewish religion but who remained an uncircumcised Gentile, Timothy would have been offensive to the Jews* (The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Moody Press). It was for this reason that Paul had Timothy circumcised. Circumcision was necessary to give Timothy good standing in the eyes of the Jews with whom he would be working. In his commentary, (Acts), I. Howard Marshall calls it *a legal act to remove a stigma from Timothy*.

No doubt Paul was charged with inconsistency for his action (as he has been charged in more recent times); but the consistency which some would like to impose on Paul is that foolish consistency.....the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. Those who deplore the absence of this consistency from Paul miss the higher consistency which aimed at bringing all the activities of his life and thought "into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5) and at subordinating every other interest to the paramount interests of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:23) (The Book of the Acts, F. F. Bruce).

B. Decrees delivered - Acts 16:4-5

Timothy joined Paul and Silas, and as they traveled, they delivered the decision of the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:23-29) to the churches in each city. The ministry of these men helped to strengthen the faith of the believers which in turn led to growth of the churches.

III. Paul is Called to Macedonia - Acts 16:6-10

It is clear to see that the missionaries were guided by God. The travel plan they followed was not their own, but that of the Holy Spirit.

A. Leading of the Holy Spirit - Acts 16:6-8

God had a plan for the missionaries, and He made His will known. After traveling through the provinces of Phrygia and Galatia (probably the southern region), they headed for the western province of Asia to preach the word but were forbidden to do so by the Holy Spirit.

They then traveled in a north-westerly direction to Mysia and were again redirected by the Spirit. Being prohibited from going into Bithynia, they went in the opposite direction to the city of Troas, a seaport on the Aegean Sea. It is interesting that Paul was prohibited from going to Asia and Bithynia because these areas were quite possibly evangelized by the apostle Peter. Both provinces are mentioned as recipients of Peter's first letter (1 Peter 1:1).

B. Vision - Acts 16:9-10

While in Troas, Paul had a vision. A Macedonian man appeared to him pleading, *come over to Macedonia and help us*. Macedonia was a Roman province just across the Aegean Sea from Troas. The call would take the missionaries and the gospel message to the continent of Europe for the first time. Paul responded to what he considered divine direction with immediate obedience. The *we* in 16:10, is an indication that Luke, the author of Acts, joined the missionary team at this point.

IV. Paul Ministers in Philippi - Acts 16:11-40

Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke set sail for Macedonia by way of the island of Samothrace.

A. Arrival - Acts 16:11-12

They arrived at the seaport of Neapolis and headed about 10 miles inland to Philippi, an important city in that part of Macedonia situated on the Via Egnatia, a road which linked the Adriatic Sea with the Aegean Sea. Philippi had been named after Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. It had been a Roman colony since 42 B. C. This meant that it was self-governing, free from imperial taxation, and that its citizens enjoyed all the same rights as citizens of Rome. In essence, Philippi was like a "little Rome" far from the homeland. We are not told where the missionary team stayed; only that they were there for *some days*.

B. Conversion of Lydia - Acts 16:13-15

It was Paul's custom to go first to the synagogue when in a new city, but there was none in Philippi. Ten Jewish men were needed to form a synagogue, so the Jewish population must have been quite small. Instead, the missionaries went out of the city to the riverside to a place *where prayer was customarily made*. Cities which had no synagogue had a designated place of prayer where the Jews met to read and study the Scriptures. They usually welcomed any Jewish teacher.

1. Preaching at the riverside - 16:13

Finding a group of women who had met beside the river, the missionaries sat down and began to preach.

2. Lydia was listening (NASB) - 16:14a

One of the women was Lydia, a *seller of purple*, from the city of Thyatira, a commercial city of Asia Minor famous for manufacturing expensive purple dye. Although she was not Jewish, Lydia was a worshiper of God (like Cornelius in 10:2). As Paul spoke, Lydia listened.

3. The Lord opened her heart - 16:14b

God opened Lydia's heart to receive the gospel message. *Divine illumination and persuasion is necessary for the heart blinded by sin to respond to the gospel* (New Geneva Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers). Jesus told those who followed Him that *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him* (John 6:44). The apostle Paul later wrote that without God, no one can understand or accept spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). It is not man's desire or man's efforts which save him. It is all in the hands of God who shows mercy (Romans 9:16). On this particular day, God opened the heart of Lydia and she became the first convert to Christianity on the European continent.

4. Lydia opened her home - 16:15

After being baptized, Lydia enthusiastically invited the missionaries to stay at her home. Her faith led to action, the exercise of Christian hospitality. In Romans 12:13, the apostle Paul later wrote that all Christians are to be *given to hospitality*. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews also encouraged Christian hospitality, *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels* (Hebrews 13:2). The apostle Peter wrote that Christians are to *be hospitable to one another without grumbling* (1 Peter 4:9). Lydia opened her home to Paul and his missionary team and she wouldn't take no for an answer (*she constrained us*). Will you follow her example of practicing Christian hospitality? Inviting your pastor or a Bible teacher to your home could be a great opportunity of blessing for you. Surely Lydia took advantage of having the missionaries in her home by listening to all they had to say about the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Deliverance of the slave girl - Acts 16:16-21

There was a slave girl in Philippi who possessed a *spirit of divination*, referring to a person who was demon-possessed or a ventriloquist (a person whose utterances were beyond their control). This girl's utterances were regarded as the utterances of a god, and her owners made money by using her to tell fortunes.

1. Demon cast out - 16:16-18

The girl followed the missionaries for several days, crying out that they were *the servants of the Most High*

God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation. Finally, Paul became *greatly annoyed*, a very strong expression in the Greek, denoting that Paul was grieved at the sad condition of the slave girl and thoroughly exhausted by the relentless provocation of the demon which possessed her. He commanded the demon to come out of her *in the name of Jesus Christ*, and *he came out that very hour*.

In Luke 4:34, a demon had recognized Jesus as *the Holy One of God*, but Jesus had refused to accept the testimony of an evil spirit. In the same way, Paul refused to accept the testimony of this demon.

2. Profit lost - 16:19

When the evil spirit left the girl, so did her owners hopes of profit. Obviously angry that their profitable business had been ruined, they seized Paul and Silas. They were not impressed by the power of Christ which had cast out the demon. They were not happy that the girl had been delivered from the power of Satan. Their only concern was that their source of profit was gone.

D. Arrest of Paul and Silas - 16:20-25

The owners of the slave girl dragged Paul and Silas into the marketplace where the authorities were.

1. Accusations made - 16:20-21

Paul and Silas were taken before the *magistrates*, the leaders of the colony of Philippi. They were accused of being Jews who were troubling the city by teaching customs which were unlawful for Romans to observe. This incident took place soon after the Roman Emperor Claudius had expelled all Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2), and since Philippi was a Roman colony, there may have been anti-Jewish feelings there. Perhaps that is why Timothy and Luke were not arrested, Luke being a Gentile and Timothy being only half Jewish. In any case, the accusations seemed to center around the fact that Paul and Silas were Jewish and not that they had ruined the fortune-telling business.

2. Beatings administered - 16:22-23a

The magistrates succumbed to the mob. They tore Paul's and Silas' robes off and ordered them to be beaten with rods. The ones who administered the beatings were the *officers*, literally *those who hold the rod*, mentioned in 16:35. They were the Roman *lictors* who attended the magistrates. Each carried a bundle of rods with an axe in the middle, symbolizing the magistrates authority to inflict capital punishment.

3. Imprisoned - 16:23b-24

They were beaten with *many stripes* and thrown into

prison. The jailer was ordered to *keep them securely*, so he put them *into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks*. In Word Studies in the New Testament, Marvin R. Vincent describes the Roman prisons of Paul's day: *The state prison was arranged on...the same plan through the Roman empire...it consisted of two parts. The first was the vestibule, or outward prison, approached from the praetorium, and surrounded by cells opening into it. The prisoners who were confined in these cells had the benefit of air and light which the hall admitted. From the vestibule there was a passage into the interior prison...It had no window or outlet except this door, which, when closed, absolutely shut out light and air. This was the place into which Paul and Silas were cast at Philippi. The utter darkness, the heat, and the stench of this miserable place, in which the inmates were confined day and night, is often dwelt upon by the martyrs and their biographers.*

4. Joy in the midst of suffering - 16:25

At midnight, in the pitch black cell, bruised and bloody from their stripes, stretched from having their feet in the stocks, and sleepless, Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God loud enough for all the other prisoners to hear. When was the last time you sang to God in the midst of pain and trouble? What a lesson there is to be learned from these godly men. They lifted themselves above their circumstances by commending themselves to God with joy. In addition, they were a powerful witness to all those who heard them. The next time you're tempted to self-pity or complaining, will you lift your voice in prayerful song to God instead? *And in the night His song shall be with me — A prayer to the God of my life* (Psalm 42:8).

E. Conversion of the jailer - Acts 16:26-34

God responded to the prayers of Paul and Silas in a way they would probably never have imagined. God's thoughts and ways are so far beyond what we could ever dream. An earthquake which shook the foundations of the prison led to the salvation of the Philippian jailer.

1. The earthquake - 16:26-28

The force of the earthquake awakened the jailer, opened the doors of the prison, and unfastened the chains of the prisoners. When the jailer saw the open doors, he feared the worst. He was responsible for the prisoners, and now they had surely escaped. He drew his sword to kill himself rather than face the penalty for negligence. Somehow Paul was aware of what was happening and called out to the jailer, assuring him that all the prisoners were still there.

2. The jailer's question - 16:29-30

The jailer called for a light, rushed into the cell of Paul and Silas, and fell trembling at their feet. Taking them out of their cell he asked, *sirs, what must I do to be saved?* The jailer probably knew why Paul and Silas were in prison and had heard about the fortune-teller who had called them *the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation* (16:17). He may have considered the earthquake to be evidence that their message was real and true. In any event, Paul had saved his life and now he wanted what Paul had to offer.

3. The jailer's change of heart - 16:31-34

Paul and Silas answered the jailer's question, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household*. The jailer then took them to his home where they further explained to him and his family what it meant to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is obvious that the Lord opened the hearts of the jailer and his family just as He had opened the heart of Lydia. The change of heart is seen in the way the jailer cared for the physical needs of his prisoners, washing their wounds, taking them into his house, and feeding them. It is further seen in his submission, baptism, and his spirit of rejoicing which filled the whole family.

It may seem surprising that the jailer would take his prisoners out of the prison and into his home. But a Roman jailer was allowed to treat his prisoners any way he desired as long as he delivered them to the authorities when commanded to do so.

F. Departure - Acts 16:35-40

1. The order for release - 16:35-36

The next morning the magistrates sent the officers (the same ones who had beaten Paul and Silas - 16:22) to order their release. When the jailer delivered the news to Paul, he protested.

2. Paul's protest - 16:37-38

As Roman citizens, Paul's and Silas' rights had been violated. They had been beaten illegally, had not received a public trial, had been thrown into prison without being convicted, and now the magistrates did not have the honesty to admit their fault. Paul objected and demanded a public apology from the magistrates. He didn't do so for selfish reasons, but for the sake of the missionary work and the new converts. If he had left Philippi without protesting their treatment, it would have been detrimental to future missionaries and the emerging church.

When the magistrates heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were fearful. It was a serious offense to mistreat a Roman citizen, especially to inflict any degrading punishment. Since the magistrates could lose their jobs, they immediately went to the prison to apologize, released the missionaries, and begged them to leave the city.

NOTE: In addition to being protected from any demeaning or abusive punishment, Roman citizens also had the right to appeal their case to the Emperor. Roman citizenship was not easily obtained and those who had it were highly esteemed. Roman citizenship was obtained in one of four ways: by birth (if both parents were Romans), by grant to certain cities or districts, by grant to individuals for political or military service, or by purchase. Paul had been born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:29).

3. Final encouragement - Acts 16:40

Before leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas returned to Lydia's house. They didn't leave until they had an opportunity to see the new converts and give them encouragement. Notice that the "we" section ends with 16:40. This probably means that Luke stayed in Philippi to shepherd the infant Philippian church.

Application

Acts 16 gives a beautiful picture of committed Christian men and women working within the will of God regardless of their circumstances.

Paul sought God's will for his missionary travels, waiting when God closed doors and eagerly going forward when God showed the way. He and Silas endured suffering and pain and put the ministry of the word above their own personal comfort. They gladly preached the gospel to the Philippian jailer and his family after enduring beatings, a night with their feet in the stocks, and no sleep. Their kindness to the jailer won him to the Lord.

Lydia and the other women had no synagogue in which to meet, but they loved God and met by the riverside to worship and pray together.

The jailer was a tough man, accustomed to working with criminals, the dregs of society, but he humbly gave loving care to Paul and Silas and their wounds.

Luke had joined the missionary team at Troas only to be left behind in Philippi to look after the church and the new converts there.

How has your life come within the confines of the will of God? How do your actions demonstrate to the world that you are a man or woman of God, living and working within His will and joyfully carrying out His plan for your life? How will you listen to God, learn from Him, and lean on Him as you follow Him this week and on into the future?