



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

Introduction

After leaving the church council in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch with Judas and Silas. Together they delivered the council's decision on the question of circumcision for the Gentile believers. It was a time of encouragement and strengthening for the Antioch church. When Judas and Silas returned to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas stayed 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 he had previously preached the gospel. His heart longed 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. The result was a parting of the ways as Barnabas sailed to Cyprus and Paul headed back to Asia Minor. Although it is disheartening to see two pillars of the church in sharp disagreement, God used even the apparent discord 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 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 evangelized. What began as a follow-up tour of cities previously evangelized became a second missionary journey that took Paul and Silas across the Aegean Sea into Macedonia and Greece where they established churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth.

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 New 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 revisit the cities where they had preached the gospel. 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 resulted in division and the two gifted men parted ways. Barnabas, the encourager, was eager to mentor his young cousin. Paul was more concerned with the ministry and unwilling to take a chance on a man who may not have been fully committed to the task. It's difficult to say 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

Barnabas took John Mark and sailed to Cyprus to encourage the churches which had been established in his homeland. Paul sent for Silas and 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 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 taught him 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). For this reason Paul had Timothy circumcised. It was necessary to give Timothy good standing in the eyes of the Jews with whom he would be working. It was 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. 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. 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 in the churches.

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

The travel plan the missionaries 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 southern Galatia, 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 most likely evangelized later 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 of a Macedonian man 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 Acts 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 ten miles inland to Philippi, an important Macedonian city situated on the Via Egnatia, a road which linked the Adriatic and Aegean Seas. Philippi, named after Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, had been a Roman colony since 42 B. C. It was self-governing, free from imperial taxation, and its citizens enjoyed all the rights of Roman citizenship. In essence, Philippi was like a "little Rome" far from the homeland. The missionary team was there for *some days*.

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

Paul's custom was 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. The missionaries went out of the city to the riverside, *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 beside the river, the missionaries sat down and began to preach.

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

One of the women present 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 Acts 10:2). As Paul spoke, Lydia listened.

3. The Lord opened her heart - 16:14

God opened Lydia's heart to receive the gospel message. "Divine illumination and persuasion is necessary for the sin-blinded heart to respond to the gospel" (New Geneva Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers). Jesus had told His followers that "*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him*" (John 6:44). Paul wrote that without God, no one can understand or accept spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). No human

being can be saved either by his or her desires or his or her efforts. Salvation is in the hands of God who shows mercy (Romans 9:16). On that day, by the riverside, God opened Lydia's heart to become 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. Later, in Romans 12:13, Paul 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 and refused to take no for an answer (*she constrained us*). Will you follow her example of Christian hospitality? Inviting your pastor or Bible teacher to your home could be a great opportunity of blessing. Surely Lydia was blessed by all the missionaries 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*, literally a "Python spirit." A "Python" was a snake or serpent which guarded the Oracle at Delphi, the most famous oracle (a medium of prophecy from the gods) of ancient Greece. This girl was a medium in contact with a demon who could predict the future. Her masters made money by using her to tell fortunes.

1. Demon cast out - 16:16-18

The girl followed the missionaries, crying out that they were "*servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation*." After several days, 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 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. Similarly, Paul refused to accept the testimony of this demon.

2. Profit lost - 16:19

When the evil spirit left the girl, her owners' hopes of profit left also. Angry that their lucrative business had been ruined, and unimpressed by the power of Christ which had cast out the demon, they seized Paul and

Silas. Their concern was not for the welfare of the girl but for their loss of profit.

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

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 troubled the city by teaching unlawful customs. This incident took place soon after the Roman Emperor, Claudius, had expelled all Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2). 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 only half Jewish.

2. Beatings administered - 16:22-23

The magistrates succumbed to the mob. They tore off Paul and Silas' robes 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 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 - 16:23-24

Paul and Silas 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 throughout the Roman empire. It consisted of two parts. The first was the vestibule, or outward prison, approached from the praetorium (military headquarters), and surrounded by cells opening into it. The prisoners who were confined there 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 fresh air. This was the place into which Paul and Silas were cast at Philippi. It was a miserable place of utter darkness, heat, and stench."

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

At midnight, in the pitch black cell, bruised and bloody from their beating, stretched from having their feet in the stocks, and sleepless, Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God loudly enough for all the other prisoners to hear. 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 their singing. When was the last time you sang to God in the midst of pain and trouble? The next time you're tempted to indulge in self-pity or complaint, 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 most remarkable way. 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 about the slave girl's proclamation that they were *servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation* (16:17). He had surely heard their songs in the prison cell. Perhaps he considered the earthquake to be evidence that their message was true. In any event, Paul had saved his life and 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. 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 jailer's care for the physical needs of his prisoners by washing their wounds, taking them into his house, and feeding them. It is further seen in his submission, baptism, and the spirit of rejoicing which filled the whole family.

It may seem surprising to us 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 - Acts 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 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. This was not for selfish reasons but for the sake of the missionary work and the new converts. Leaving Philippi without protesting their treatment would have been detrimental to future missionaries and the germinating 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 degrading punishment. The magistrates could lose their jobs for what they had done. No wonder they immediately went to the prison to apologize, released the missionaries, and begged them to leave the city.

3. Final encouragement - Acts 16:40

Before leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas returned to Lydia's house to see the new converts and give them encouragement. Notice that the "we" section ends with Acts 16:40. This probably means that Luke stayed in Philippi to shepherd the new 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, Barnabas, Silas, Lydia, the jailer, and Luke, our writer, have all demonstrated kindness, courage, humility, love and caring for others, and joy in the Lord. How is your life being conformed to 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 glorifying Him with your life? Will you listen to God, learn from Him, and lean on Him as you follow Him this week and on into the future?