

***>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 27 <<<<<<<***

- 1) Paul and Barnabas and the rest of those who went with them to Jerusalem for the Council are now back in Antioch.
- 2) They have probably shared the results of the council with all churches along the way back to Antioch and finally of course with the church in Antioch.
- 3) Things have settled down and those who were sent to Antioch along with Paul and Barnabas have returned home with the possible exception of Silas.
- 4) So, moving on, let's see what happens next.

**Acts 15:36-41 (NIV)**

- 5) Okay, “Houston, we have a problem”!!
- 6) Again, we really do not know why John Mark left Saul and Barnabas at Pamphylia on the first missionary journey.
- 7) There is much speculation regarding this – I even shared a new one I came across a couple of weeks ago. (See **NOTE - Tom Davis Lecture** at the end of this lesson PDF)
- 8) One way or the other, Paul will have none of this and he and Barnabas part ways.
- 9) We also do not know if this disagreement was private or not but it appears that the result was that Paul and Silas got the blessing of the believers there as they departed.
  - a) From what I was able to gather, this is the same Silas that came from Jerusalem to Antioch after the council.
- 10) We don't know how the church felt about Barnabas and Mark and there going a different way.
  - a) Of course, again, Cyprus was Barnabas' home and was also where he and Paul had planted some churches.
  - b) Obviously, he would have wanted to share the results of the council with them if nothing else.
  - c) As far as where else they may have gone, we have no evidence that Barnabas and Mark went anywhere other than Cyprus at this time.

**Acts 16:1-5 (NIV)**

- 1) So, here we meet Timothy.
- 2) Timothy was evidently already a believer – Christian.
  - a) Well thought of by the church at Lystra and Iconium.
- 3) Now, Paul wants to take him along as they go from “town to town” so, he circumcises him which may seem a little inconsistent on Paul's part.

- 4) In order to understand all this we need to look at some background.
  - a) Now, Timothy was considered a Jew from birth.
  - b) The Jewish way of looking at heritage was the mother was an absolute.
    - i) Under Jewish rabbinic law, since his mother was Jewish, Timothy was Jewish and needed to have fulfilled the covenant – i.e. circumcision under the Law.
  - c) The father was not necessarily a determining factor so it really made no difference to Timothy's religious heritage that his father was Greek.
- 5) So, the problem here is that he was obviously not circumcised by custom when he was eight days old.
- 6) This is one of those passages that, if one does not consider context – in this case, Paul's normal mode of operation, Paul could be considered as making a **bad** compromise here.
  - a) Of course, the context here consists of several facts that must be considered:
    - i) Paul's normal mode of operation was to go to the Jews first in their synagogues.
    - ii) Since it was well known throughout the region that Timothy's father was Greek and his mother was Jewish, this brought in some doubt as to his status.
    - iii) By this, since Timothy was being considered a Jew his not being circumcised was a problem.
  - b) Bruce Barton sums this situation up quite nicely:

Paul may appear to be inconsistent here with his teaching in Galatians 2:3–5, where he refused to let Titus be circumcised. This is easily resolved when considering the difference in the circumstances of the two situations. In Galatia, circumcision was being proclaimed (heretically!) as a method of justification. Paul wanted to clarify that it was not, so he intentionally left Titus uncircumcised to make his point. Here in Lystra, early on in his evangelistic endeavors, Paul was more intent on avoiding any potential offense that might hinder the spread of the gospel (see Romans 9:32–33; 1 Peter 2:8; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 9:19–23). Although the Jerusalem council had just ruled that circumcision was not necessary for Gentiles, Paul apparently thought that Timothy's mixed religious background might hinder his effectiveness. So, because Timothy was partly Jewish, he was circumcised. This was merely for effectiveness in spreading the gospel, not as a prerequisite for salvation.<sup>20</sup>

### **Acts 16:6-10 (NIV)**

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<sup>20</sup> Bruce Barton et al., [\*Life Application New Testament Commentary\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 529.

- 1) Basically, Paul and the others leave Pisidia Antioch and want to head south into the province of Asia.
- 2) I call this God playing bumper pool with Paul.
- 3) Paul is making decisions one after another and God is saying no,
- 4) As to going south to Asia, He is probably saying “Paul that’s not what I want you to do.” (at least for now).
  - a) God says no – they are “kept out by the Holy Spirit.”
  - b) God has a plan for Asia but not now.
  - c) We know that He does because we know at least some of the major churches that Paul founds there later:
    - i) Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.  
(1) Hold on to the Thyatira church in your mind for a few minutes.
- 5) O.k. we can’t go to Asia, so, let’s go north to Bithynia and Pontus.
  - a) Get to Mysia and OH NO!! – “Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.” go into Bithynia.
- 6) O.k. – Let’s go on down to Troas on the coast and see what we can do there.
- 7) They get to Troas and they get put on the right track.
  - a) Paul has a vision and it is off to Macedonia as quickly as possible.
  - b) The vision, as we will see, is not taken literally – i.e. Paul is not headed there to search for a particular man.
  - c) He understands clearly that this is where God wants them to go to continue their missionary work.
  - d) Aha! – Finally a plan.
- 8) As I was thinking about this whole episode in Paul’s journey, I wondered what the roadblocks were that the Spirit threw in front of him.
- 9) Were they actual “roadblocks” or was he just in tune with the Spirit enough that he knew that he was not to go where he had planned?

***Have you ever had an experience where God was playing bumper pool with you – forcing you down a path that you really did not plan to go down?***

***In hindsight, do you think you have ever missed God’s leading?***

***Why do you think you may have?***

- 10) Here’s one of those subtle things we probably need to take note of.
- 11) Looks like Troas is where Luke actually joins Paul, Silas, and Timothy in their journey.

- a) It is here that the pronoun usage changes from “they” to “we” as they proceed from Troas on into Macedonia.
- b) We actually see the “we” pronoun for the first time in verse 10.

**Acts 16:11-15 (NIV)**

- 1) This is obviously a two-day voyage from Troas to Neapolis.
  - a) Samothrace is an island (one of a group of 4) which is about halfway between Troas and the Macedonian mainland.
- 2) Once they arrive in Macedonia, they are, we assume, led by the Spirit to continue on to Philippi to begin their work.
  - a) Philippi is a major city and trade center – not the capital but very important.
- 3) I have always found this passage very compelling.
- 4) Paul goes to the river for a place to pray – no mention of a synagogue which is his normal mode.
- 5) The consensus is that there was simply not a Synagogue in Philippi.
  - a) There are at least two possible reasons for this:
    - i) First, there may not have been enough Jewish men in the city to form a synagogue.
      - (1) The requirement was to have at least 10 Jewish men in the location in order to have a Jewish synagogue.
    - ii) Second, there is reported to have been a sign inscribed on the city gates that prohibited bringing unknown religions into the city.
      - (1) With this lack of a Jewish presence, the “Jewish religion” may not have been established.
- 6) So, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke probably heard that there were some Jewish believers who were meeting for prayer outside of town near the river.
  - a) As Luke says, they expected to find a place of prayer.
  - b) Once they arrive, Paul begins sharing the Gospel with the women who are gathered there and the first person who receives Paul’s message is Lydia.
  - c) Lydia is most likely a Gentile woman who, as Luke puts it, “was a worshiper of God.”
    - i) We are not told anything about her background. How she became a “worshiper of God.”
    - ii) Remember, I asked you to hang on the Thyatira, one of the seven churches in Asia – well now you see why – Lydia is from there.
      - (1) Obviously now living and working in Philippi.

- d) Several commentaries place significance on Lydia's situation.
  - i) As a head of household, the assumption is that she was single.
    - (1) She may have been widowed or divorced – again, we just are not told.
    - (2) If she had had a husband, he would have most likely been Gentile as well.
    - (3) Obviously she is smart, strong, and capable.
  - e) She and her household were baptized which must mean that they were likely believers and worshipers of God as well. Again, an assumption but probably valid.
  - f) Finally, asking Paul and his group to stay with her while in Philippi, indicates she had a good-sized home – probably a villa.
- 7) The reason we needed to look at this at this detail was simply this – Lydia and her household is the true foundation of the Church at Philippi.
- 8) As we will soon see, the next individuals becoming part of the church there are also Gentiles.
- 9) Even if there are Jews there, it appears that this church will be predominantly Gentile from the very beginning.
- 10) So, continuing on, we are still in Philippi and, it appears we are still meeting at “the place of prayer” (likely still the river).
- 11) We have to assume that the word is spreading and more and more folks are coming to the Lord as they continue to teach.

### **Acts 16:16-18 (NIV)**

- 1) There are several interesting questions we might ask about this situation.

#### ***First, the spirit, evil or good?***

- 2) Evil because it was dealing in fortune telling.
- 3) Perhaps good in that it was speaking the truth about who Paul and the others were and what their message contained.

#### ***Second, was Paul annoyed at the spirit or the girl?***

- 4) I have to think it was the spirit – the girl was just a vehicle and may not have even been able to control or understand what was happening as she said these things.
- 5) We can probably assume that the slave girl is o.k. after the ejection of the spirit but this does pose a problem.

### **Acts 16:19-24 (NIV)**

- 6) The first thing we might want to note here is that the effect is not immediate.

- a) It likely takes a while for the owners to realize they have lost their cash cow.
- 7) However, once they do, revenge is the answer!
- 8) I guess there was no real law against what Paul did as far as casting the spirit out of the slave girl and also no way to recover their lost livelihood.
- 9) So, they have to say something to get Paul and Silas in trouble.
- 10) The charge was not that they had performed an exorcism on a slave girl, but rather that these men were Jews and were teaching the people to do things that are against Roman customs.
- 11) As we said, the church there was probably growing so this was a real concern.
- 12) These magistrates would have two primary goals, **one** to keep the peace and **two** to stop foreign religions from “corrupting” their citizenry.
- 13) Both charges, false or true, were exactly what was needed to get the job done.
  - a) Throwing the city into an uproar – definitely not keeping the peace!
  - b) Advocating unlawful customs – definitely not in keeping with the religious order!
- 14) Then, the coupe de gras – the crowd joined in the fray.
- 15) The magistrates then did what they knew would settle the situation for now.
  - a) They had them beaten (turns out this was only one of 3 different times Paul gets this treatment in his ministry (2 Cor 11:25))
  - b) Likely, Silas and Timothy were either not present for this particular incident or, if they were, Luke being Greek and Timothy partially Greek, they may have been spared.
- 16) Okay! Beating over – off to jail – and in stocks!

### **Acts 16:25-28 (NIV)**

- 1) The jailer had obviously fallen asleep either because of Paul and Silas’ praying and singing or in spite of it.
- 2) An earthquake will normally get your attention and obviously this time it did get his.
- 3) Now, this was probably a pretty quick set of events but, the jailer did not actually realize that the doors were likely just opened so no one had escaped yet.
- 4) He knew instinctively that he was going to be executed because all his prisoners had escaped – it made no difference why – only that they had and, it would be obvious also that he was asleep on duty.
- 5) So, he decides immediately to kill himself rather than face that punishment.
- 6) Paul of course stops him.

- 1) ***NOTE - Tom Davis Lecture*** – most interesting opinion was on Mark's reason for leaving Saul and Barnabas at Paphos. The church at Antioch was founded (Gentile side) by Cypriot and north African disciples. His contention is that the original plan for the journey was to cross Cyprus and continue then to Alexandria to bring the Gospel to north Africa. What may have happened is when Paul and Barnabas decided to head north to Attalia and Galatia, Mark may have seen that as a betrayal of the original planned mission.
  - a) Davis brought to the forefront of the picture that Cyprus was indeed very much dual cultural. The East was very much Hellenistic, which Paul would have been very much comfortable with. However, the West was very much Roman which caused Paul to switch up his methods and basically, the roles of Saul and Barnabas swapped. From the beginning to Paphos, Luke uses Barnabas and Saul – from Paphos on, it becomes Saul and Barnabas then Paul and Barnabas. John Mark could have seen this as a betrayal of his uncle in that case.
  - b) This is further supported by the fact that once the split takes place at the beginning of the second missionary journey, Barnabas and Mark actually do go to North Africa as was the possible first plan.
  - c) In truth, this is one of the best if not the best explanations for this split and the original defection that I have ever encountered.
- 2) Further, Dr. Davis indicated that Paul and Barnabas may have been carried to Attalia on a ship belonging to Sergius Paulos. He had relatives in Pisidian Antioch and was likely at least one of the reasons for the mission going there.
  - a) I asked the question but it was too late to get it answered – why did they not return to Cyprus on the return journey?
    - i) Combination of two things is possible in my mind: first, if indeed the trade route was really from Cyprus to Alexandria as indicated then what I had proposed in my comments on Acts may have been true – there was just no available transport. This could be doubly true based on Sergius supplying the initial transport to Attalia.