

Second Missionary Journey: Macedonian Call & Philippi
Read Acts 15.36—16.40

INTRODUCTION / CONNECTIONS / CONTEXT

1/ In our [last lesson](#), we reviewed the ‘Jerusalem council’ when they met together to discuss and decide how they, the Jewish Christians, should relate to the Gentile believers whom God was calling to salvation. Paul and Barnabas have now returned from Jerusalem and **“remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord, with many others also” [15.35]**. But the burden for their ministry to the wider world of the Gentiles continued to burn in their souls.

2/ So this next section of Acts will give the itineraries of their next missionary campaigns. What we are now calling ‘the second missionary journey’ will be told in **chs 16.1-18.21**. There is a brief two-verse ‘turnaround’ in **ch 18.22-23**, where we will see Paul’s return to Caesarea, then down to Jerusalem, then back to Antioch before he begins his ‘third missionary journey.’ But for now, we will focus on the ‘second missionary journey.’ This journey will highlight ministries in Derbe and Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. And, of course, as we review the names of these cities, we will immediately recognize how significant these ministries were because Paul’s correspondences with them are contained in several of his epistles: Philippians, Thessalonians, Corinthians. Ephesus and Ephesians will enter our attention when we come to the third missionary campaign.

I / ch 15.36-41 | Paul and Barnabas disagree—go their separate ways

1/ Paul and Barnabas continue their reports to their home/sending church in Antioch and process the outcome of the Jerusalem council. But, **“after some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the Word of the Lord, and see how they are.’”** This would mean backtracking again over the routes of their first missionary journey for the purpose of discipling, teaching, and training the churches in their beliefs and practices of the faith. This again is in keeping with Jesus’ **Great Commission: ‘make disciples...teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you.’** This must be an on-going ministry for healthy, effective, out-reaching churches.

2/ Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them again, even though Mark **“had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work” [see 13.13]**. Paul disagreed, and their disagreements could not be resolved, so they decided to part ways with one another. NOTE that their disagreements with one another did not cause them to ‘quit the ministry’ or ‘leave the church’ because both Paul and Barnabas continued on with their separate missionary ministries: **“Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.”** NOTE: this does not mean that the church didn’t commend Barnabas and Mark also; but the Acts narrative will focus on Paul’s ministry in the purposes of Christ.

3/ **“And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”** Paul’s route was to go north again on the mainland back to the churches they had established on the last stops of their first journey.

II / ch 16.1-5 | Paul re-visits Derbe and Lystra—Timothy joins the team

1/ **“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra.”** The accounts of his last visits to these cities are told in **14.8-23**. He had been stoned and left for dead in Lystra on his first visit there. But here we see evidences of the Gospel fruits of his ministry there. Timothy’s grandmother Lois and mother Eunice had been converted [see **2 Timothy 1.3-5**], and they, in turn, had led Timothy to faith in Christ. He had rapidly grown in his faith and service to Christ and the church there, and **“He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.”** So much so that **“Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him...”**

2/ Here is an interesting incident: Timothy was half-Jewish by his mother, but his father was a Gentile [Greek] and apparently objected to his being circumcised. But since many of Paul’s outreach audiences were Jewish, and he didn’t wish to unnecessarily offend them [see **1 Corinthians 9.19-23**], Paul asked

Timothy to be willing to be circumcised. NOT because it would ‘add’ anything to his salvation, but rather because this was a ‘cultural/contextual concession’ that would make them more acceptable to their Jewish audiences whom they wished to reach with the Gospel. **NOTE that Paul would refuse to have the Gentile Titus circumcised as a ‘requirement’ for salvation to other Jews [Galatians 2.3-5].**

3/ As they continued on to the newly-established Gentile churches, **“they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.”** So here Luke is tying in the significance of the ‘circumcision question’ that had been settled in **ch 15.19-29**.

III / vv 6-10 | The ‘Macedonian Call’

1/ **“And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia...”** These are Roman provinces and regions in what we call Asia Minor [modern-day Turkey]. But then, as they proceeded to penetrate more into Asia Minor, they were **“forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia ... and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them”** to go farther. We can’t be sure how those hindrances played out in their plans and attempts to make their way to those regions—we just know that the Holy Spirit put up some kind of ‘stop sign’ in their spirits or ways. Because Jesus obviously had willed and purposed for them to go to other ‘regions beyond’ them—into what we now know as Western Europe via of Macedonia/Greece.

2/ So they bypassed the city of Mysia near the coast and walked still westward to the seaport city of Troas. The Holy Spirit in some way ‘put the squeeze’ on their travel plans to locate them in the launching city to their Divinely-purposed destination. While they were at Troas, **“...a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us!’”** This is one of the most significant ‘turning points’ of the Gospel that will eventually bring it to us! The northern waters of the Mediterranean are the Aegean Sea. The missionaries will sail west on the Aegean Sea to the southern parts of Macedonia to further the advance of the Gospel! NOTE here that Luke, the narrator, has personally joined the missionary team—he changes his narration from ‘they’ until **v 10**, and from then on, it’s ‘we/us.’ **“And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the Gospel to them.”**

IV / vv 11-15 | Philippi: the conversion of Lydia

1/ Samothrace and Neapolis are ‘entry port’ cities—**“and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.”** That means that Philippi was not just a city under Roman occupation and rule, but was a ‘little Rome.’ Although there were probably some Jews there, and they certainly knew what Jews were [see **v 20**], it seems there weren’t enough Jews to have a synagogue.

2/ So Paul started asking around if there were any Jewish worshipers that anybody knew about. He heard about some women who were known to meet **outside the gate by a riverside**. So, on the Sabbath day, Paul went to join them at their **place of prayer**. He met up with Lydia, an entrepreneur of purple dye from Thyatira, **who was a worshiper of God**. This means that she had heard and learned of the Jews’ **God** and had begun to seek and worship Him short of becoming a proselyte, though she knew nothing of the Gospel of Christ. Paul began to talk and preach Jesus to them. Here again, we witness the sovereignty of God intersecting the witness of Christ with those whom He chooses to save [see **ch 13.48**]. **“The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”** She believed in Christ and His Gospel. She was baptized upon her profession of faith **and her household as well**. As far as we can discern in retrospect, Lydia was first convert in ‘W Europe’ and became a charter member of the church in Philippi. She immediately opened her home to Paul and the missionary team: **“If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.”** This was the ‘house-church’ start of the Philippian church.

V / vv 16-24 | Philippi: beaten and imprisoned

1/ BUT, with these fruitful beginnings of the Gospel and the advance of the Kingdom of God and the planting of the new church, there is also an immediate conflict and assault from the kingdom of darkness.

Spiritual warfare immediately ensues. As they would make their way day by day to their place of prayer, there was a slave girl who was demon-possessed. She would tell people's fortunes for a fee and **brought her owners much gain**. She would stalk and follow Paul and the missionaries, **"crying out, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.'"** Sounds innocent enough, but Paul and the missionaries don't want or need the testimonies of demons to announce their message. We know from Jesus' experiences that demons fully recognize Him, His supreme authority, and His sovereignty over them. Whether the demons in this girl are mocking the servants of the Most High God or whether they are trying to 'co-opt' and 'piggy-back' on their message of life, power, and truth, we don't know. What we do know is that Paul knew this was an attempt by the Devil to subvert and undermine their ministry or try to establish some kind of 'tandem association' with them to maintain their influence and financial cash flow. But, **"Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the Name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour."** As Paul will later write to the Corinthians: **"For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial?" [2 Corinthians 6.14-15].** But in casting out her demon, Paul also stopped her owners' cash flow from her occult services.

2/ This led to an all-out assault against Paul and Silas. They **"dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, 'These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.'"** They incited the crowd into a flash mob to attack them, the magistrates ordered that they be beaten with rods; **"And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely."** And he followed their orders. [Cf. 2 Corinthians 11.25.] This is how they ended up in the Philippian jail. But we've seen God's sovereign purposes overrule His enemies' intentions over and over already—just here in Acts—and we're about to see it again.

VI / vv 25-34 | Philippi: the conversion of the Philippian jailer

1/ Paul and Silas responded like the early Jerusalem disciples did when they, too, were persecuted, beaten, and imprisoned in 5.41: **'Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name.'** Here again **"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."** They worshiped, witnessed to, and glorified God. God chose to manifest His Presence, show His power, and affirm His faithful servants: **"...and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened."** The snoozing jailer was jolted out of his slumber, and when he saw that all the doors of the prison were flung wide open, he feared what should have been most expected—that all the prisoners had escaped! He knew what the consequences would be for him if they had—he would be executed for the dereliction of his duty, so he thought he would save his superiors the trouble: **"he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped"** [cf. 12.19]. But Paul intervened and rescued him from his intended suicide: **"But Paul cried with a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!'"**

2/ The jailer is amazed! Who are these men? And who is their God he had heard them praying to and singing about until up into the early morning hours? No doubt he had earlier ordered them to shut up and quit disturbing everyone's 'rest'—but now he wants to know Who and what they know that he doesn't! And so, we read this all-so-familiar encounter and interview: **"And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'"** There has been a lot of debate and questioning about what kind of 'salvation' he is inquiring about. We have no idea what he may have heard or known about their God and God's redemption from sin. But what we can be sure of is that he had just witnessed a powerful display of their God's personal Presence and intervention even in their physical circumstances. And their influence in saving him from physical death was a powerful witness to him that their God—whoever He was—was a God of Grace and mercy—a deliverer from every kind of danger. His request reveals at least a conviction

of his conscience that he was accountable to their God. He wanted to know more! Paul and Silas gave him the quintessential and indispensable distillation of our Gospel confession of faith: **“And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”** In this confession of faith, Paul and Silas declare that **Jesus** is the only **Lord**, and that He is the only Savior in every sense.

3/ This encounter gave Paul and Silas the opportunity to explain the Gospel more fully to him. **“And they spoke the Word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.”** The jailer ministered to their physical needs also. **“And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.”** Where and how they were baptized is a matter of conjecture. Luke says **“at once.”** Did they go back in the middle of the night to the riverside where the worshiping prayer group had been meeting? Or is Luke ‘compressing’ events here, and they were baptized immediately maybe the next day? We don’t know—we just know that they were. And we also know that those who were baptized had **believed in God**. I say this because some have argued for ‘infant baptism’ from this account—which is the second description of ‘household salvation’ just here in Philippi [see v 15]. But, there is no New Testament record of anyone ever being baptized except those who consciously and intentionally understood the knowledge of the Gospel and received and believed in Christ through repentance and personal God-given faith in Him.

4/ [Do we wonder also about how they may have been taken from the prison cell to another location—‘his house’? None of these details are essential to the point of the narrative, but we do wonder. **V 34: “Then he brought them up into his house...”** And then v 40: **“So they went out of the prison...”** Or did the jailer and his family maybe live in an upstairs apartment quarters in the jail facility? Since Paul and Silas had voluntarily stayed in the prison cell when they could have easily escaped, they would have also volunteered to go back into incarceration in the prison to continue their submission to the civil authorities and their witness to the Gospel of Christ. After all, that’s why they had come to Philippi and why they had submitted to their unjust flogging as Roman citizens [see the next section].]

VII / vv 35-40 | Philippi: Paul exercises his Roman citizenship—leaves Philippi

1/ By this time, all of these overnight events had reached the magistrates who had ordered them flogged and imprisoned just hours before. The magistrates had seen enough. They had tangled with the wrong God who had shown Himself to be **Lord** and sovereign over all the Roman gods they knew anything about. **“But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, ‘Let these men go.’”** The jailer relayed this discharge order to Paul and Silas. But they are unwilling to accept the authorities’ terms of discharge.

2/ Paul chose rather to invoke his rights as a Roman citizen [as he will again later in chs 22.25-29 & 25.11]. Paul had been born and raised in Tarsus which was a ‘free city’—anyone born there was granted Roman citizenship with full rights. And those rights included that of not being beaten or punished without a fair hearing and trial, which had not been granted them the day before. **“But Paul said to them, ‘They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out!’”** The magistrates now face the prospect of being reported to their superiors for violating a basic Roman law and privilege of citizenship. But Paul is offering them a peace gesture. **“The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. So they came and apologized to them. And they took out and asked them to leave the city.”**

3/ Paul and Barnabas stop by to visit with Lydia and the other believers on their out of Philippi, and **“they encouraged them”** to continue strong in their new-found faith in Christ and their commitment to follow Him. And with these events, the much beloved church in Philippi was established and will continue on with a long-standing relationship of affection and support for Paul and his ministry [e.g. **Philippians 4.15**].

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you too will be saved!”