

Acts 16 Chapter Study

- I. The Church At Jerusalem Chs. 1-7
 - II. Persecution & Peace Chs. 8-12
 - III. Launching Out Chs. 13-28
 - A. *Paul's First Missionary Journey Chs. 13-14*
 - B. *Controversy ! 15:1-35*
-

C. *Paul's Second Missionary Journey 15:36-18:22*

1. Paul & Barnabas split-up 15:36-41

³⁶ Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." ³⁷ Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸ But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹ Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. ⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Paul suggests he & Barnabas head back out to check on the churches they'd planted a few years before on their first missionary venture.

When Barnabas wanted to take John Mark, who'd bailed on them before, Paul refused.

The disagreement became so sharp, they decided to split up.

Barnabas took John Mark & headed back to the island of Cyprus.

Paul took Silas & they headed north & west, toward Cilicia, Paul's native region.

[MAP]

There's an important lesson to be gleaned from the *split* between Paul & Barnabas that we'll take a look at in a few weeks.

2. Lystra & Derbe: Timothy joins Paul 16:1-5

¹ Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. ² He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

Derbe & Lystra were the *last 2 cities* Paul & Barnabas had reached before heading home on their 1st journey.

Since Paul & Silas have come overland this time, they came in the *back way* & hit these 2 cities *first*.

The churches they'd planted were doing well.

In Lystra, were Paul had been stoned & left for dead, there was a promising young believer named *Timothy* Paul recognized great potential in.

Timothy's mother was a Jewish believer while his father was a Greek, an unusual arrangement for that time, & a sign of the wild, *frontier* nature of this area. Jews count the *mother's* nationality as the basis of identity, while Greeks & Romans look to the *father*.

So Timothy was unique positioned as a missionary in that both Jews & Gentiles would consider him one of their own.

Paul saw him as a valuable asset to the work of spreading the gospel & determined to take him along

³ Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

Hold on! Why is Paul doing this? He was the one who'd argued so *vehemently* against the need for Gentiles to be circumcised.

The reason Paul urged Timothy to submit to this rite was because *Tim wasn't just Gentile*, he was *Jewish too*.

He enjoyed a unique *dual-status*. But his lack of circumcision would *neutralize* his effectiveness in reaching Jews.

It was going to be Paul's routine, as before, to go to the synagogue *first* to preach the Gospel.

Paul & his team would draw on their *Jewish roots* to begin the work of planting a church.

Tim's *lack of circumcision* hindered his status as a Jew.

Paul knew it was *wisest* to remove any *potential objection* by having Timothy circumcised.

What we see in Paul at this point is how *balanced* he was in his approach to *doctrine & practice*.

When it came to the issue of what Gentiles had to do to be saved, he held an uncompromising stand & commitment to the principle of salvation by grace through faith, not works.

He refused to give an inch to the Judaizers who demanded Gentiles be circumcised & keep the law.

But when it came to Timothy, a young *Jewish* man Paul recognized would make a great addition to his team, he knew a *lack* of circumcision would place & unnecessary barrier to some Jews being able to hear the Gospel.

If an offense was going to come, Paul wanted it to be over the Gospel, not something totally completely beside the point.

Paul knew opposition would come, so he was zealous to remove anything that might give his opponents ammo.

In 1 Cor. 9, He described his approach this way. . .

{19} Though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; {20} and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; {21} to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but

under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; {22} to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. {23} Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Let's learn from Paul's example here.

Let's be careful not to throw up *unnecessary obstacles* as we seek to share the Good News with the lost.

The *only offense* we should bring is the offense of the Gospel itself.

Let's say you're invited to a fellow workers house for a BBQ one Saturday.

You walk in the front door & they are playing some nasty crunk; some heavy gangsta' rap you *abhor*.

Would it be *wise* to insult their taste in music?

To run out to your car, grab your CD's then come back in, pull down the stereo, & replace *50 Cent* with *The Bill Gaither Trio* or *Tennessee Ernie Ford Sings the Hymns?*

We can't demand the lost live by the principles of righteousness, or adhere to our convictions & scruples.

Go ahead & dislike gangsta' rap all you want.

But don't let your dislike for it become an *obstacle* to your love for them or your wise & attractive sharing of the truth & love of God that will win them to faith.

Paul had Tim submit to circumcision for *one reason*, to remove a potential obstacle to some hearing the Gospel.

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

As Paul, Silas, & Timothy went back through the areas where Paul & Barnabas had been before, they made sure everyone heard the news about the Jerusalem's council's decision.

It was important they did because the Judaizers were all over this area.

Notice v. 5. When did the churches grow in size?

When they were strengthened in faith.

How does faith come? By *hearing* the Word of God, thru the ministry of the Scriptures.

This is what Paul & Silas did when they visited the fellowships, *they taught*.

The local churches were *edified*, faith grew, and more were won to faith.

The *best means of outreach*, isn't so much to put on big productions & evangelistic events as it is to build up the Body of Christ, the flock of God.

Healthy sheep produce lambs.

When believers are faithfully following the Lord, unbelievers are affected.

The most effective form of evangelism isn't an anointed sermon, it's a *changed life*.

I rejoice to see what's happening here at Calvary. We rarely hold special evangelistic outreaches yet we continue to grow.

It's not rapid, growth. It's not several dozen who respond to some major event. It's the slow, steady growth of people who come because they see a change in the life of the people they work with & live near.

People are learning, & living God's Word, & that's drawing the lost to a relationship with Jesus.

3. Galatia: The call to Greece 16:6-10

⁶ Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. ⁷ After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. ⁸ So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

Paul's journeys were an interesting combination of *strategic* planning & *sensitivity* to the Spirit.

Having visited the churches that had been planted throughout the area, Paul decided to head west toward the population centers of Asia.

There were several key cities there that would make strategic centers for the spread of the Gospel.

So passing through Galatia, as they approached Asia from the east, the door shut hard & fast against them.

How, we're not told but it was clear they were *not* to enter Asia.

If not Asia, then where? Arriving in Mysia to the north of Asia, they set their gaze on Bithynia even further north, but that door closed too.

There was only one road open – westward toward the coast.

Several commentators suggest what halted them from entering Asia & Bithynia was some kind of serious illness Paul came down with at this time; a fever that left him with a permanent eye problem.

They suggest this because of Paul's reference to his thorn in the flesh that drove him to depend so completely on the grace of God.

In writing to the Galatians he makes reference to the time he visited them and how in their love for him they would have plucked out their own eyes to help him.

Then, in just a couple verses, we'll read about Luke the physician joining Paul's team at Troas.

This must have been a tremendously confusing time for Paul, Silas, & Timothy.

As they moved west, everywhere they looked they saw need & opportunity.

But every attempt was thwarted.

The only thing they found *ANY* success at was moving toward Troas on the coast.

You see, *God wanted them to leave Asia* for the time being & head over to Europe across the Aegean Sea.

The day would come when Paul would work in Asia, but now was not that time.

God had been at work preparing the soil of Macedonia for the Gospel & the time was ripe.

So He used circumstances to direct them.

It will occasionally happen in our lives that following the Lord is *confusing*.

We'll be going along, doing really well with the Lord, even being in the center of His will, when all of a sudden, things seem to fall apart & the course that seemed so obvious becomes a brick wall.

We'll find ourselves traveling a new direction, one that doesn't make any sense at the time.

But looking back, when all is said & done, we realize God was at work doing things we could not see.

Right now, were in a holding pattern in our pursuit of a building.

Conventional wisdom says we ought to be *aggressively* trying to grab a piece of property.

But as I've sought the Lord on this what I'm sensing is the call to *wait*.

God is doing something –He's *aggressively* securing us a piece of land.

What we're to do in the meantime is to actively wait for it by preparing ourselves so that when He says, "MOVE" – we'll be ready & able to.

Paul's team arrived on the coast at Troas. Once there, it became obvious to Paul why God had shut the doors.

⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Across the Aegean Sea to the west lay the Greek mainland & the continent of Europe.

Though Rome ruled the world, Greek thought & language was the dominant cultural influence of the Empire.

Paul knew for the Gospel to take root & spread throughout the world it would need to plant itself firmly within the Greco-Roman world; & that meant churches in Greece & Italy.

He'd wanted to hit the strategic centers of Asia.

God had opened an *even more important door* - Greece !

And just to make sure he was getting the message clearly, God gave him a *vision* of a Greek Macedonian, inviting him to come and preach the Gospel.

Note that in v. 10., Luke uses the word "*we*" for the first time. He joined Paul's team at Troas.

4. Philippi 16:11-40

¹¹ Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis,

The waters of the Aegean Sea can be treacherous & best navigated in the light of day.

So their ship sailed from Troas to the island of Samothrace where they dropped anchor, then set sail the next morning & landed in Greece at Neapolis, which was the port for the important city of Philippi, located 10 miles inland.

¹² and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of

Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. Philippi was the government administrative center of this province of Macedonian Greece.

It was well known throughout the Empire for one very important reason.

In 42 BC, it was the site of the decisive battle between Mark Anthony & Augustus on one side, & Brutus & Cassius on the other which *ended* Rome's civil war & catapulted Augustus into the limelight - *forever altering* the form & power of the Roman Empire.

To commemorate this important battle, Augustus declared Philippi an official Roman *colony*, meaning it would have access to royal funds for special building projects.

Retired legionaries were encouraged to settle down there & turn it into a thoroughly Roman city.

The *Via Ignatia*, a vital trade route connecting Europe & Asia passed through the city.

Because it was a strategic center, the team spent many days there, preaching & teaching.

¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.

According to Jewish law, if there were 10 Jewish male heads of households, in a city, they had to establish a synagogue.

Lacking that, they were to meet for prayer under the open sky by a body of water, preferably a river.

We see that here, which means the Jewish population of Philippi was small.

One of the first things the team would have done when they arrived in Philippi was ask around about fellow Jews.

They would have been directed to this prayer meeting.

When they arrived, they discovered the group was made up only of women, probably ladies who'd married Greek & Romans & settled here in Philippi.

If they followed the usual service, the women would recite the *Shema*, say traditional prayers, read from the law & prophets, then discuss what they read.

If a visitor showed up, he'd be invited to share a word of greeting & any news.

This day, they gave the floor to a rabbi from Jerusalem who'd studied under their beloved sage Gamaliel.

¹⁴ Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. ¹⁵ And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

Because Philippi was an important commercial center, business people from all over the world traveled there.

One of them was a textile merchant named Lydia.

Her hometown was the Asian city of Thyatira, which was well known for the quality of its wool cloth sheared from special sheep. This cloth was dyed

with a rare & expensive purple unique to Thyatira.
Only the wealthy could afford the Thyatiran purple but there was still a considerable market for it & Lydia has set up a special outlet for it in Philippi.

Because she spent so much time there, she bought a home. She was wealthy & connected.

It says a lot about her business acumen that in a male-dominated world, she'd become a respected merchant who could travel freely between Asia & Europe.

She was also drawn to truth & had heard it in the religion of Israel.

She was one of the many God-fearing Gentiles who went to synagogue to hear the teaching of the word, or in this case to the riverside on the Sabbath.

Because she was a seeker of truth, when Paul preached, she recognized it *as truth* & received it.

Her faith led the way for her entire household to come to faith as well.

She then persuaded the team to be her guests.

16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." 18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

The little group of believers continued to meet by the riverside each day.

One day as they made their way there, a young demon-possessed slave girl started following them & shouting that they were true servants of God.

This went on for several days as they went to prayer until Paul had had enough. He rebuked the demon, casting it out of the girl.

Her masters had grown quite wealthy off the fat fees people paid to have her read their fortunes.

Her powers of divination came through the demon that possessed her.

But make no mistake, demons do not KNOW the future in the same way God does.

What demons do is *make predictions*, then work behind the scene to bring them to pass.

Gullible humans are tricked into thinking they can foresee the future & are led to the place of listening to demons. It's all a trap to *deceive* & lead people astray.

Paul let this gal go on for a few days, but eventually, when the crowds were giving *more attention to her* than to his message, he put an end to it & cast the demon out of her.

As it departed, so too did her ability to tell fortunes & line her master's pockets with gold.

19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged *them* into the marketplace to the

authorities. ²⁰ And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, “These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; ²¹ and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe.”

Upset that their income had been cut off, they attacked Paul & Silas & hauled them before the city magistrate.

These were false charges! There were no new customs they were advocating.

But the accusers were appealing to a very sensitive issue the city authorities would be concerned to uphold as a Roman Colony – *the Pax Romana*.

The charge someone with defying Roman hegemony was one that many places wouldn't tolerate *any* messing with.

Philippi was one of those places – & it's why these guys point out Paul & Silas' *Jewish roots*.

The Jews were *well known resisters* of Roman rule.

Just the *charge* they were subversives would raise a cry against them.

So they accused Paul & Silas of *disturbing the peace*.

Yeah, a couple of prayer meetings at the riverside, & silencing a demon possessed girl are pretty dangerous threats to civic harmony aren't they?

If anyone was disturbing the peace it was these slave owners.

They were the ones who incited a mob, not Paul's & Silas'

They were the ones who were dragging men through the streets & making serious charges of rebellion.

It's sickening how people will lie & cheat when it comes to money.

This poor young girl had lived a nightmare life of pain & torment.

Her masters ought to have rejoiced that she was set free.

But no, they were *upset* & went on a rampage because of their lost income.

There are many businesses today that make merchandise of people & destroy souls for the sake of gaining a buck.

Strip clubs, Porn shops, Abortion clinics, Casinos

The statistical evidence for the devastating effect these businesses have on people's lives is *overwhelming*

But they still go forward & government officials are reluctant to do anything about them for fear of being sued.

Only 2 times in Acts do we find *Gentiles* initiating hostile action against Paul.

The rest of the time, it was Jews who raised opposition to him.

But in both cases where it's Gentiles, here in Philippi & later in Ephesus, the *motivation* for their attack was *monetary – lost income*.

The Gospel had a *financial impact* in the lives of those who received it & that impact affected those the believers dealt with.

When the Church is strong & believers are walking in holiness, certain businesses can't survive.

Any businesses that thrives off lust & perversion will wither when the Gospel is strong.

That means we need to be ready to endure the wrath of those who make merchandise of sin.

They will come against us when we walk in holiness.

I like what Alexander MacLaren wrote, “The church may be very sure that it is failing in some part of its duty, if there is no class of those who fatten on providing for sin *howling at its heels*, because it is interfering with the hope of their gains.”

22 Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded *them* to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Notice that there was not one shred of truth to the charges against them.

They weren't disturbing the peace & there was *nothing* in their message that violated Roman law.

But the *charges* were enough to spark a near riot; & *for that* – they were beaten.

As the tide continues to turn against the Church & Gospel, we can expect more of this kind of thing.

It will get to the point where all it will take is for someone to *charge*

Christians with trying to enforce their narrow views of morality & belief on others & the public hue & cry against us will grow so loud, there'll be no opportunity for a fair hearing.

The day of debate, of reasoned discourse is rapidly coming to an end.

I'm reading a growing antagonism in editorials from hostile critics calling for the silencing of all religious discussion – specifically, all Christians & Jews.

There's a surprising openness to *alternative religions*, but almost a knee-jerk resistance to anything that's what we would call classic Judeo-Christianity.

Paul & Silas were never tried, never given a chance to speak.

They were never asked about the charges or given an opportunity to address their accusers.

Where was the highly esteemed *Roman justice* here.?

Where was the vaunted *Greek reason* they took such pride in?

The very things these city magistrates took as their badge of honor, their sense of reason & fair-play, went right out the window because of nothing more than a whipped up frenzy of the mob.

Having been publicly beaten & humiliated, Paul & Silas were turned over to the jailer, who locked them away in the heart of the prison.

A Roman prison was no *Club Fed*. They were dark, smelly, rat & germ infested cesspools of filth & decay.

To add to their misery, their feet were shackled to stocks which made getting in a comfortable position to sleep impossible.

So there they sat; in the dark, in the stink, the sound of the rodents scurrying around them.

And all because of a ridiculous charge, a false arrest, a sham trial, & an absurd judgment.

Put yourself in their place. What would be *your attitude*? What would *you be doing* while you sat there.

I'm sure I would not be a happy camper. I'd be complaining loud & long!

I'd be demanding God show up & explain Himself!

After all, they had gone to Philippi *for Him*, to do *His* work.

It hardly seemed right that they would be treated this way.

'Missionary' no longer looks like a fun calling. I'd be planning a career change as soon as I was out of there. But that wasn't Paul & Silas' reaction -

25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

This is so convicting!

Where we'd expect Paul & Silas to be upset & complaining, they're *worshipping & praising* God.

They don't blame Him for letting them down. They don't doubt His love & care.

No, they trust that in the midst of it all, God is still working out His perfect plan.

They knew that plan doesn't *always* lead through gentle meadows filled with fragrant flowers.

Sometimes it leads through dark, stinking prison cells.

No matter where it led, they were to stay faithful to follow Him because there was some important lesson to be learned or task to perform.

Sure it may go against their desires – but they'd learned early on their desires were too small & selfish.

They knew that when the going gets tough, the tough start praising, because some glorious move of God lies just around the next corner.

As Paul & Silas worshipped, the other prisoners listened – & were confronted with a whole new way of looking at adversity.

The faith of these 2 men was turning the dark stink of prison into the beautiful light of a new way of living.

They were beginning to see that *freedom* has more to do with the *attitude* of one's heart than the condition or location of one's body.

26 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 chains were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.

The reason for this drastic action on the part of the jailor was because he was responsible for his wards.

If a prisoner escaped, then the jailor would have to serve the escaped prisoners sentence.

There must have been some serious criminals in that prison who were awaiting execution.

When the jailor saw the prison gates standing wide, he just assumed all the prisoners had fled.

28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for

we are all here.”²⁹ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.³⁰ And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

No prisoner who remain in a jail like that if the opportunity for escape presented itself!

There was NO explanation for their continued presence in the jail except for one reason, concern for HIS welfare.

When the jailor realized he was *that precious* to Paul & Silas, that they would even tell the *other* prisoners not to flee too – it rocked his world to the core & left him without reference point.

There was nothing left standing in the way to his hearing the strange message they called the Gospel.

³¹ So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.³⁴ Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.³⁵ And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, “Let those men go.”

The magistrates figured a night in jail after a good wippin’ would be enough to put the fearin them and shut them up.

They also knew they’d perverted justice pretty badly & just wanted to have the whole thing over with.

So they sent word to the jailor to release them and send them on their way.

They weren’t counting on Paul’s response.

³⁶ So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace.”³⁷ But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.”³⁸ And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.

As Roman’s Paul & his companions were entitled to a full trial.

According to Valerian & Porcian laws, they were *exempt* from all forms of degrading punishment like being publicly stripped & beaten!

All Paul had to do was file a complaint with the proper Roman officials & these guys would have been history & they knew it.

Moreover, a Roman could not be *expelled* from a Roman city.

Paul was not merely being petty or vindictive here. He was not trying to exact revenge.

If he was, he’d have had these guys’ heads.

Really, he was looking past the moment & his own hurts to the work of the Gospel in Philippi.

These officials had proven themselves unfit.

Paul knew the fledgling community of Christ there would face some stiff opposition from these guys.

So he made sure they were put on notice that they'd better wise up & back off.

They owed a huge debt to Paul's silence, a debt they could pay by leaving the Church alone.

³⁹ Then they came and pleaded with them and brought *them* out, and asked *them* to depart from the city. ⁴⁰ So they went out of the prison and entered *the house of Lydia*; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.