

Acts 16:1 ¶ Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek:

Acts 16:2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

Acts 16:3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

Continuing on their journey, Paul and Silas traveled through Derbe and on to Lystra, the place where Paul had been stoned and left for dead on his first missionary journey. Research indicates that this was probably five years after their first visit to this city. Lystra was the hometown of a disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek; the NIV Commentary notes that the Greek implies that his father was now dead. Timothy had a strong testimony and was well thought of by the people of Lystra and Iconium. Paul asked Timothy to join him and Silas on their journey. Timothy was considered a Jew in the eyes of the Jewish people since his mother was Jewish. Paul noted in his second letter to Timothy that both mother and grandmother had ensured that Timothy was well versed in knowledge of the scripture.

2 Timothy 3:15 "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The fact that Timothy had not been circumcised seems to imply that his father had not been a proselyte to the Jewish religion. So why did Paul circumcise Timothy since it had already been determined by the council in Jerusalem that it was not necessary for salvation? I think that the comments by JFB made the most sense: "...in circumcising Timothy, 'to the Jews he became as a Jew that he might gain the Jews.'" This was a principle Paul lived by as recorded in his letter to the Corinthians. I assume he explained this principle to Timothy and that he agreed with the apostle; I am sure it was not a forced circumcision.

1 Corinthians 9:19–22 "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

Acts 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

Acts 16:5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Luke notes that as Paul's team traveled through the different cities, they made

the churches aware of the decree from the leaders of the church in Jerusalem concerning the salvation of the Gentiles. They ensured that each church was established in their foundational beliefs, and the churches experienced daily growth as a result.

Churches today should take note. All that is needed for the church to experience healthy growth is for God's people to teach the word and testify to its truth by how they live.

Acts 16:6 ¶ Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, Acts 16:7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. Acts 16:8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

After completing their journey through Phrygia and Galatia, Paul's team evidently made plans to go to Asia (the area of Turkey); however, in some way the Holy Spirit forbade them to do so. Upon reaching Mysia, they decided to go into Bithynia; however, again the Holy Spirit forbade them to do so. Finally, they came to Troas.

David Guzik noted some interesting facts: "David Livingstone wanted to go to China, but God sent him to Africa. William Carey wanted to go to Polynesia, but God sent him to India. Adoniram Judson went to India, but God guided him to Burma. God guides us along the way, to just the right place."

I don't know how God's Holy Spirit communicated with Paul, but I believe He still directs us today as we seek to serve Him. It is not wrong to make plans, Paul's plans were good; it's just that God had another plan. If God had not interfered they would have continued with their own plans. I believe He deals with us the same way if we are truly seeking to serve Him. Sometimes "doors are shut" that block the direction we thought to take. Other times He will give us a check in our spirit that leads us to change direction. I'm sure there are many other ways He can communicate with us—the key being that He will guard our feet and direct our paths.

1 Samuel 2:9 "He will keep the feet of his saints...."

Proverbs 3:5–6 "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

I truly don't believe God allows us to make a "mistake" when we are seeking to serve Him. He promises to make "all things work together for good to those that love Him." (Romans 8:28)

Acts 16:9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. Acts 16:10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to

preach the gospel unto them.

Acts 16:11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next *day* to Neapolis;

Acts 16:12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and* a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

Luke records that one night Paul had a vision of a man imploring him to come to Macedonia and help the people there. They took this as a sign from the Lord and immediately headed out, arriving first in Samothracia (an island in the Aegean Sea), then on to Neapolis (the seaport of the inland town of Philippi) the next day. They continued on to Philippi, the chief city in that part of Macedonia, a designated Roman colony, and decided to stay there a few days.

Mark Dunagan notes that a Roman colony “enjoyed three things: (1) Self government. (2) Freedom from paying tribute to the Emperor, and (3) The rights of those who lived in Italy--including Roman dress, language, coinage, and holidays.”

“straight course” – Several commentaries note that this is a nautical term for sailing with the wind at your back. This journey took two days, but the return journey took five days according to Acts 20:6.

Note that Luke says that “we” were in that city, implying that he had become part of Paul’s team along the way. I found that Philippi was noted for having a famous school of medicine. Maybe Luke, Paul’s “beloved physician,” was one of its graduates.

The NIV Commentary noted that Paul’s vision that led him to Macedonia was very significant in that it led to the evangelization of Europe and the Western world.

Acts 16:13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*.

Acts 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Acts 16:15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

Luke notes that on the Sabbath they left the city to go down to the river in expectation of joining a prayer gathering. The NIV Commentary provides the following explanation: “In Jewish law, a synagogue congregation could be formed only if there were at least ten male heads of households. Failing this, a place of prayer under the open sky and near a river or the sea was to be arranged for.”

Upon arriving at the riverbank, they began to talk to some of the women

gathered there. One woman was identified as Lydia, a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira. This city was famous for its purple dye and fabrics. These dyes and fabrics were very expensive, which would seem to imply that Lydia was probably quite wealthy.

She already “worshipped God,” a phrase that according to Dunagan meant that she was a Jewish proselyte (and the context support this conclusion). Luke notes that her heart was receptive to the gospel message declared by Paul because the Lord had opened it. She was then baptized along with all the others in her household. She begged Paul to bring his team to stay at her house; so they did.

“the Lord had opened it” – I think this is true for every person that receives the Lord as Savior. He allows or brings about circumstances in our lives that are intended to open our hearts to receiving His truth. One example: He sent John the Baptist to preach and prepare the people to receive Jesus when He stepped out in ministry. The key is always whether we are willing to take advantage of those opportunities.

Acts 16:16 ¶ And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

Acts 16:17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

Acts 16:18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

The place of prayer being referenced seems to be the same place by the river where they first met Lydia. On their way to that place, they encountered a slave girl that was “possessed with a spirit of divination,” a demon. She was recognized as having the ability to tell the future and made a lot of money for her owners. She began following Paul’s team and loudly proclaiming, “These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.” This didn’t just happen one time; she did this for many days. Paul finally had enough and commanded in the name of Jesus Christ that the spirit come out of her—and he did, that very same instant (from the Greek for “hour”).

What she was yelling was the truth, but it was probably how she was saying it—obviously disdainfully—that was the problem. Considering her reputation as having a known gifting that most would have considered a gift from the gods, she was hindering Paul’s ministry.

Luke does say that Paul was “grieved” by the girl, and the Greek implies that it caused him worry and anguish. I think he was as concerned for the girl as he was about the hindrance she was causing to his ministry.

Ray Stedman notes: “The devil has two approaches—apparent alliance or outright attack. Jesus never let demons testify to His identity. Satan will soon begin to pervert the truth.” That last statement is sure in evidence today!

Acts 16:19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the marketplace unto the rulers, Acts 16:20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, Acts 16:21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. Acts 16:22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*.

The owners of the slave girl were furious when they realized all the money they would lose as a result of her healing. They seized Paul and Silas and took them to the ruling authorities (the Greek implies dragging) to file charges against them. They accused Paul and Silas of causing a lot of trouble in the city and teaching people to disobey Roman law, and they made a point of identifying them as Jews. The NIV Commentary noted, "Anti-Semitism lay very near the surface throughout the Roman Empire." Evidently, there was quite a crowd present, and the men were able to incite them to anger. The authorities (I'm sure to appease the crowd) stripped Paul and Silas and commanded that they be beaten; they weren't even given a chance to defend themselves.

Observations: Some things never change. 1) This woman was in the same position as many women today—taken captive and used to make a profit for others without regard to their own well-being. The fact that pornography and human trafficking are so prevalent throughout the world today provides plenty of testimony to this truth. 2) Anti-Semitism is still prevalent throughout the world as declared through the news headlines every day.

Acts 16:23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Acts 16:24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. Acts 16:25 ¶ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

After suffering a very severe beating, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison and placed under the direct supervision of the jailor. He immediately took them into the inner, most secure part of the prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. You would think that the two men would be exhausted, moaning and groaning and complaining to God. Not Paul and Silas; they prayed and serenaded the other prisoners by singing praises to God in the middle of the night. Personally, I believe God touched them so as to lessen the pain they felt.

Acts 16:26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. Acts 16:27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

Acts 16:28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, **Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.**

Luke tells us that suddenly there was a great earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison and caused all the doors to open and all the chains holding the prisoners to come loose. I don't know how an earthquake could loosen the chains; I think this was just another part of the miracle that accompanied the God-caused earthquake. When the jailer realized that the prison doors were open, he drew out his sword ready to kill himself. He knew that if the prisoners had escaped, he would be executed; suicide would have been considered the more honorable way to die.

Paul saw what was happening and called out for the man to stop because all the prisoners were still there. Another miracle—Can you imagine those in prisons today not taking advantage of an opportunity to escape?

Acts 16:29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

Acts 16:30 And brought them out, and said, **Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**

Acts 16:31 And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.**

Acts 16:32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

Acts 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

Acts 16:34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

I'm sure the jailer couldn't believe his ears. He called for a light and ran in trembling to fall down before Paul and Silas. He had evidently heard their message and was now convinced that message was true. He knew he had just witnessed a series of miracles. He brought Paul and Silas out and immediately asked them, "What must I do to be saved?" Their answer was one that has stumbled so many who just can't believe they don't have to do something to earn salvation—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Paul and Silas added that this invitation was open to his whole household.

Evidently, the jailer took them to his home since Luke records that Paul and Silas shared the word of the Lord in more detail to all that were in his house. Belief involves more than just head knowledge. To believe in the "Lord Jesus Christ" is to acknowledge Him as Lord in your life and as the Son of God sent to sacrifice Himself as your Redeemer. It implies a desire to turn from your wicked ways and serve Him in obedience.

Only now are we told that the jailer tended to the wounds suffered by the two men. That had to be painful as well since the mixture of blood and dirt would have dried and crusted over.

The jailer and his family were baptized. Paul and Silas then enjoyed a good meal,

and the jailer and his family rejoiced in their newfound faith.

Acts 16:35 ¶ And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

Acts 16:36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

Acts 16:37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

Acts 16:38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

Acts 16:39 And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city.

Acts 16:40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of Lydia*: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

In the morning the ruling authorities sent word by their officers to let Paul and Silas go, and the jailer so informed Paul. He then bid them to go in peace.

Paul had a surprise for the jailer and the ruling authorities—they had beaten and jailed Roman citizens without due process of the law. Paul didn't intend to let them off the hook by just leaving; he demanded that the magistrates come themselves to release them. They had very publicly condemned them, and Paul was demanding that they just as publicly acknowledge that they had been wrong in doing so. When the officers told the magistrates what Paul had said, they were afraid. They were subject to severe consequences for such action.

The NIV Commentary notes, "According to Roman law, a Roman citizen could travel anywhere within Roman territory under the protection of Rome. He was not subject to local legislation unless he consented, and he could appeal to be tried by Rome, not by local authorities, when in difficulty.... To beat and imprison a Roman citizen without a trial was a serious offense." At the least, they could expect to lose their positions.

Evidently, they came before Paul and Silas with an humble attitude begging their forgiveness and asking them to leave the city before any more trouble arose. Note—They were asked to leave, not commanded.

Paul and Silas left the prison and went to Lydia's house to meet with the believers and encourage them to stay strong in their faith. Then they left.

Commentators posit that Luke must have stayed behind in Phillipi since there are no more references to "we" until chapter 20 when they are once again in Phillipi.