

Paul's Second Missionary Journey Acts 16-18:22

Revisit churches from first journey.

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. Acts 15:36

Paul and Barnabas ended up with a sharp contention over John Mark and the decision was made to separate and work independently. So Barnabas took John Mark and returned to Cyprus. It is helpful to remember that this is the country where Barnabas grew up.

And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. Acts 4:36-37

Paul determined to take Silas and go through the regions of Syria and Cilicia taking the letter and encouraging the disciples.



When he returned to the city where he was stoned and left for dead, he found a young man who was had a great reputation among the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. He decided to take this young man with him. Like Titus, Timothy also became a test case for circumcision. For although the decrees made it clear they did not have to be circumcised, to make Timothy more useful to Paul

in entering Jewish synagogues, so circumcision becomes a matter of expediency. The churches were strengthened in faith and grew daily.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Not only did the Holy Spirit give them the words they were to preach, but also the places. Although they sought to enter Asia as the most logical next step they were overruled. First to the southwest and then to the North they sought to go, but the Spirit forbid them to preach in Asia and were not permitted to go into Bithynia.

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. 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." Acts 16:6-10

That only left the straight course to Troas. When they reached Troas two important things happened. First, they were given a vision of a man of Macedonia pleading with them to come and help them. Second, Luke joined them.

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. Acts 16:10

The pronoun changed from "they" to "we."

After seeing the vision they talked it over and the four evangelists determined to pass over into Macedonia. Setting sail they landed in the port city of Neapolis, and soon came to Philippi (Acts 16:11-12). The time was about 50-52 AD.

The Work in Philippi

Luke tells us two important things about this city. It was the first in the district, and it was a colony. Though the former has been subjected to differing interpretations, the simplest is that it was the most important city in the province of Macedonia. It is the second statement however, that sheds the most light on the nature of the city and of the church which was established there. To be a Roman colony had a great deal of meaning to the people of the day. Though situated almost 800 miles from the Imperial City, this colony was a miniature copy of Rome. It had all the benefits that those living in the city of Rome enjoyed. This was the place where the soldiers of Caesar's army were given land as a reward for their good service. This was where they could enjoy all the privileges of Roman citizenship and continue to benefit the empire by living in an outpost, keeping those living in the area in check by their presence. This clarifies why there was such a great uproar when the owners of the slave girl falsely accused Paul and Silas of teaching customs unlawful for Romans to observe.

The most important consideration regarding its status as a colony is the proof it gives about the quality of people living there. Churches generally reflect the quality of the people living in the cities from which they are called out. The Gauls were well known for their fickleness and instability. One can certainly see this mirrored in the letter to the Galatian church. Corinth was known for its immorality and it too is most certainly reflected in the letter written to that church. Philippi contained the best Rome could produce. Its most loyal citizens and its best soldiers. The letter to this church certainly reflects it. It is the only letter where Paul has nothing to correct except two women who can't quite get along with one another. It has much to praise, most notably the gifts of money sent to Paul just days after leaving their city. They manifested a maturity which gave Paul the confidence to accept their financial support. A confidence he could not hold toward Corinth even after 5 years of their existence.

If we sowed unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things? If others partake of this right over you, do not we yet more? Nevertheless we did not use this right; but we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. Know ye not that they that minister of the sacred things eat of the things of the temple, and they that wait upon the altar have their portion with the altar? Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things; and I write not these things that it may be so done in my case; for it were good for me rather to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. (I Cor. 9:11-15).

Or did I commit a sin in abasing myself that ye might be exalted because I preached to you the gospel of God for nought? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you; and when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on any man; for the brethren, when they came from Macedonia, supplied the measure of my want; and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself (II Cor. 11:5-11).

Perhaps the greatest influence on the Philippian church was Luke's efforts as their evangelist. He stayed behind after Paul, Silas and Timothy left. This is inferred in Acts 16:39-40 for the narrative once again changes from "we" to "they". All indications are that Luke remained there during Paul's ministry at Corinth, his trip to Jerusalem, and his stay at Ephesus. This would be a period of at least five years. During this time Luke worked with them. Only on the judgement day will all the good done during this time be made manifest. After that five year period Paul went to Jerusalem taking the alms to the needy saints there. Luke went with him. He also continued with him to Rome (Acts 20:6 shows Luke leaving Philippi since "we" begins again and Acts 27:1 states "we" sailed for Rome).

After their arrival, Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke begin searching for a synagogue. But all they can find is the possibility that some devout people met near the river on the Sabbath. They find a group of women and are given the opportunity to speak with them.

Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. 13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. Acts 16:12-14

One of the women was moved to obey the gospel and she and her entire household were baptized and prevailed upon the four men to come and stay at her home. Paul later described this in his letter to the Philippians.

And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. Acts 16:14-15

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, 5 in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. Phil 1:3-6

We are not given a clear time frame as to how long between these events and the casting out of the demon that led to Paul's imprisonment. Only that after many days of the demon's taunting, Paul turned and sent him out, leading to the owners' fury and a trip to the magistrates, leading to prison.

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. 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. Acts 16:18-19

The charges leveled against Paul were only half-truths, but the general prejudice against Jews, led to an immediate sentence. If they had investigated and found out they were also Roman citizens they would never have acted in this manner.

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." 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. Acts 16:20-24

The Philippian Jailer

The earthquake and removal of all the chains was clearly an event from God, but what was its purpose? It was not to release the prisoners who belonged there. It was not to release Paul and Silas who would have been released the next day anyway. So the best and most obvious answer was to bring about the conversion of the jailer.

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. 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?" Acts 16:27-30

It is evident from his question that he knew who these men were and what they had been preaching. He had evidently been touched enough that this event pushed him to the decision that he cried out in his question. In quick succession we see his faith, repentance and baptism.

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. Acts 16:31-34

Paul and Silas are Released

Although the magistrates are going to send these men away as criminals who had been publicly disgraced, Paul is not going to allow that to happen. As he did in Jerusalem years later, he chose to proclaim his Roman citizenship (and that of Silas). The fear this created is based on the fact that this was a Roman colony and under strict Roman rule. To condemn a Roman and beat him without "due process" was a very serious offense that struck fear into the hearts of these magistrates.

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. 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. Acts 16:37-40

In this way, Paul vindicated himself and Silas, but more importantly, he removed any stigma that might have attached itself to the church due to the false charges and mistreatment. The "we" ceases since Luke remained behind and Paul, Silas and Timothy continued on to Thessalonica.

Thessalonica

The first three weeks of Paul's visit were spent in the Jewish synagogue. Paul's custom was always "to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16).

2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." Acts 17:2-3.

These first three weeks must have been very exciting for Paul. They were very productive, bringing great results.

And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. Acts 17:4

After the third week, the Jews who were not convinced that Jesus was the Christ became very jealous of Paul's success with the Gentiles. They sought to put a stop to it as quickly as possible and were willing to stoop to any means to do so. They gathered a mob and tried to find Paul, Silas and Timothy. When they could not do so they took the owner of the house in which he was staying and took him before the courts. After many false accusations, the court being very troubled took a bond from Jason and the other brethren which would become forfeit if any more trouble ensued.

But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. 7 "Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king-- Jesus." 8 And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. 9 So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. Acts 17:5-9.

Whether this security was their house and all their possessions, their liberty, or their lives is not expressly stated, but whatever it was it caused the immediate departure of Paul and Silas.

Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Acts 17:10.

It was here that another breath of fresh air entered their hearts. Like Philippi, here too were good hearted people, but these were among the Jews.

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. Acts 17:11-12

But there was still a concern for the new converts in Thessalonica left under such extreme circumstances with only Timothy to help them. Although Berea was only a little over fifty miles from Thessalonica, on foot that is a four day round trip journey. Perhaps Paul had hoped he could safely continue to help the brethren while preaching there. Such was not to be the case though. The hatred of the Jews at Thessalonica was so intense that when they heard that Paul was there, they hurried over to persecute and drive him even further away.

But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. 14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there. Acts 17:13-14.

Paul was now alone. Luke was in Philippi, Silas and Timothy working between Berea and Thessalonica, when Paul came by ship to Athens. Although he had sent word back for both Silas and Timothy to come so he could hear what was happening, it was some time before they could arrive.

Now those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed. Acts 17:15

While in Athens, Paul preached to the Jews in their synagogue and to the Gentiles in the market place.

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. 17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshippers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. Acts 17:16-17.

The Holy Spirit recorded the sermon Paul preached to philosophers which ended in their mockery of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Although some people were converted, Paul chose to leave Athens and go on to Corinth.

So Paul departed from among them. 34 However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them. Acts 17:33-34.