



Book of Acts

Chapter 16

The second missionary journey of Paul

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The Invasion of Europe

When Paul and his companions (Silas, Timothy and Luke) crossed the Dardanelles, which separates Europe from Asia, they changed the whole course of Western Civilization!

McGee Introduction: The final verse of chapter 15 actually told of the beginning of the journey. Paul and Silas “went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.” From there *they* will go up into the Galatian country. *Paul* will visit the Galatian churches because that is where the problem had arisen with the Judaizers. The Epistle to the Galatians is Paul’s letter to them, sternly warning them about being led astray by those who are trying to put them under the Mosaic system. It is his strongest declaration and defense of the doctrine of justification by faith. Not only is a sinner saved by grace through faith, but the saved sinner lives by grace. Grace is a way *to* life and a way *of* life.

Again let me suggest that you follow Paul’s journey on the map. You will find that traveling with Paul is a very thrilling experience. On this second missionary journey we will go with him to Europe (after he has received the vision of the man in Macedonia). We will see that he arrives in Philippi where he ends up in the local jail. At midnight Paul and Silas pray and sing praises! An earthquake shakes the jail, the doors are opened, and the jailer opens his heart to receive Christ as Savior.¹

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:

They went back to Lystra, where Paul had been stoned.

[**Then came he**] That is, Paul, in company with Silas. Luke does not give us the history of Barnabas, but confines his narrative to the journey of Paul.

LAN: Timothy is the first second-generation Christian mentioned in the New Testament. His mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois (2 Tim. 1:5), had become believers and had faithfully influenced him for the Lord. Although Timothy’s father apparently was not a Christian, the faithfulness of his mother and grandmother prevailed. Never underestimate the far-reaching consequences of raising one small child to love the Lord.

¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:581). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It is believed that Paul finds Timothy here and from this time on, Timothy is closely associated with Paul (Rom 16:1).

- Convert from previous visit (16 years old?) 14:7.
- His mother Eunice (2 Tim 1:5) as well as her mother, Lois, had instructed Timothy in Scriptures from infancy (2 Tim 3:15). His mother was Jewish but his father was a Greek, yet brought up in the Scriptures.
- Two of Paul's letters addressed to him:
 “My own son in the faith” (1 Tim 1:2, 18; 2 Tim 1:2)
- In 6 of Paul's Epistles, Timothy is joined in salutation.
- Timothy was with Paul on his 2nd missionary journey:
 ...at Ephesus during the days of strife;
 ...with him on last journey to Jerusalem;
 ...with him on his first imprisonment;
 ...Paul sent for him in the loneliness of his 2nd imprisonment;
 ...his son, his child, his comrade in the fight..

He called Timothy (2 Cor. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2,18; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:2; Philemon 1: 1; Hebrews 13:23). Converted by Paul on his first trip (Acts 14:6-7 with 1 Tim. 1:2). Part Jew and Greek, uncircumcised, but a good Christian (Acts 16:1-3). A miracle worker like Paul (1 Cor. 16:10). Paul's companion from here on (Acts 16:1-3; Acts 17:14-15; Acts 18:5; Acts 19:22; Acts 20:4; Romans 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19). On a mission (Hebrews 13:23, note). It is believed by some that he was Paul's scribe in writing Hebrews and Galatians. He had the gifts of the Spirit (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). He was a great student of Scripture (2 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:15).

the son of a certain ... Jewess—“The unfeigned faith which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois” descended to “his mother Eunice,” and thence it passed to this youth (2Ti 1:5), who “from a child knew the Holy Scriptures” (2Ti 3:15). His gifts and destination to the ministry of Christ had already been attested (1Ti 1:18; 4:14); and though some ten years after this Paul speaks of him as still young (1Ti 4:12), “he was already well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium” (Ac 16:2), and consequently must have been well known through all that quarter.²

JNTC: He was the son of a Jewish woman and therefore a Jew, not a Gentile. Many Christians suppose he was a Gentile for at least these two reasons: (1) At Numbers 1:2 God calls for a census of Israel “by their families, by their fathers’ houses.” (2) The genealogies in the *Tanakh* always mention the men and only rarely the women.

Nevertheless, while legal responsibilities and entitlements are passed from father to son (see Mt 1:1N on “Son of” and “Son of Avraham,” Mt 1:24–25N, Lk 3:23–38N), Jewish and non-Jewish descent are invariably traced through the mother, not the father. The child of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father is Jewish, the child of a Gentile mother and a Jewish father is Gentile. If a Gentile woman converts to Judaism, she is a Jew, and

²Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ac 16:1). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

her subsequent children are likewise Jewish. The questions for us are, first, whether this was the case in the first century, and, second, even if it was, is it authorized biblically?

In his interesting book, *Who Was A Jew?—Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1985), Lawrence H. Schiffman has a chapter, “The Jew By Birth,” in which he dates matrilineal Jewish descent to at least the second and probably the first century C.E., adducing as evidence Mishna Kiddushin 3:12, Tosefta Kiddushin 4:16, and Josephus. Among the supportive biblical passages is Ezra 10:2–3:

“And Shechanyah ... answered Ezra, ‘We have trespassed against our God and taken foreign wives from the people living in the Land So, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and such as are born to them’ ”

The phrase, “and such as are born to them,” implies that the children of Jewish fathers and Gentile mothers are Gentiles and not Jews; otherwise they would not be excluded from the Jewish people in this covenant. Oved, the son of Bo‘az and Ruth the Moabitess, is Jewish not because of his father Bo‘az but because Ruth became Jewish first, not by some formal conversion process (there was none at the time) but with her confession, “Your people shall be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16; 4:9–10, 21–22). Schiffman discusses these and other relevant biblical passages, concluding that inheriting Jewishness and non-Jewishness through the mother goes “back as far as the mid-fifth century B.C.E.” (*Who Was A Jew?*, p. 16). In other words, the practice is biblical.

Former Chief Rabbi of Israel Shlomo Goren gives evidence that not only is it biblical but many centuries older; see his article on pp. 32–37 in Baruch Litvin, compiler, and Sidney B. Hoenig, editor, *Jewish Identity: Modern Responsa and Opinions on the Registration of Children of Mixed Marriages* (Jerusalem & New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1970).

The importance of tracing Jewishness through the mother increased when Jewish life became disrupted and Jewish families were broken apart by conquerors and persecutors. The rabbis reasoned, first, that where Jewish women were being abused it might be impossible to determine who the father was and therefore whether he was Jewish; and, second, that since a child’s loyalties are often determined by the mother because she spends more time with him, a child raised by a Jewish mother and a Gentile father is more likely to be brought up loyal to Judaism than the child of a Jewish father and a Gentile mother who will not give him the early training that builds such devotion.

The conclusion that Timothy was a Jew and not a Gentile is important for understanding v. 3&N.

Timothy was the son of a Jewish woman **and a Greek father**. Since exogamy violates Jewish law, an explanation is called for, although any conclusion must be a conjecture. I think the most likely reason for Timothy’s mixed parentage is that Timothy’s mother, Eunice (2 Ti 1:5), like many Jews today, was assimilated into the dominant Gentile culture around her and simply did not observe *halakhah*. Before coming to New Covenant faith she married a non-Jew, but afterwards her pagan and nonbelieving husband left or died; whereupon she raised her son in the faith “from childhood” (2 Ti 3:15). Possibly she and Timothy went to live with her Messianic Jewish mother Lois (2 Ti 1:5).

Many Messianic Jews like to say that believing in Yeshua “makes us even more Jewish.” One result, in some cases, is that we become more attentive to Jewish laws and

customs. But if the above explanation of why Timothy's father was Gentile is correct, it is clear that coming to faith did not make Eunice more observant. For if she had been observant, she would have seen to it herself that her son got circumcised. In Judaism the responsibility for circumcising a Jewish boy rests with his Jewish father but not, of course, with a Gentile father. If the father is unwilling or, as in this case, unable to take responsibility for his son's circumcision, the *beit-din* (Jewish religious court) sees to it, acting on behalf of the Jewish community as a whole. If a boy has not been circumcised by the time he reaches thirteen, *bar-mitzvah* age, the obligation to get circumcised becomes his own. While the mother is not directly accountable for her son's circumcision, nothing prevents her from urging the boy's father or the *beit-din* to act. Unlike Moses' wife Zipporah (Exodus 4:25), Eunice did not take this responsibility on herself, which is why Timothy was still uncircumcised when Sha'ul arrived on the scene, so that he, himself an observant Jew (see 13:9), acted *in loco patris* (v. 3&N).

Here are other possible reasons, likewise speculative, why Timothy had a Jewish mother and a Gentile father:

- (1) It was not a marriage but the rape of an observant Jewish woman. This is not impossible, given the antisemitism and level of violence in ancient Roman society. This explanation has appeal for Messianic Jews who would like to paint a picture of every Jewish believer as *Torah*-true and gloss over the fact that the Gospel has appeal for assimilated Jews too.
- (2) Eunice came to faith before her marriage and therefore considered herself no longer Jewish but Christian, therefore not subject to the *Torah*, so that she had no scruples about marrying outside her people. Those who think accepting Yeshua decreases Jewish loyalty or frees a Jew from the Law might prefer this explanation, but the New Testament evidence is against it. Jews who accepted Yeshua as the Messiah did not suddenly consider themselves ex-Jews; everything in the book of Acts demonstrates exactly the opposite. Moreover, accepting Yeshua as the Jewish Messiah does not free a Jew from the Law; this point is made in numerous notes in this commentary. A different point: although there is no specific evidence that the teaching had yet been promulgated, we know that believers in Yeshua were encouraged to marry other believers (1C 7:39&N).
- (3) She simply fell in love with the man. But this explanation reflects twentieth-century fantasy, not first-century reality.³

Derbe and Lystra (16:1-2)

After his pastoral visit to the churches in Syria and Cilicia, Paul travels to the city of Derbe. His first trip to this and other cities in Galatia was discussed in 14:6-21. After his activities in Derbe are completed (Luke gives no details), Paul takes the northwest road to Lystra. Again, Luke says nothing about what Paul does in the city. Luke's main interest here is to show how Timothy becomes Paul's associate.

Apparently Lystra is Timothy's hometown (20:4). He is already a member of the church, as the disciples in Lystra and Iconium speak well of him. Most likely Timothy was converted as a result of Paul's preaching on his first missionary journey. Timothy's mother and grandmother are also Christian believers (2 Timothy 1:5). His mother, Eunice, is Jewish and has instructed Timothy in the Hebrew Scriptures.

³Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 16:1). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Timothy will become the most important of Paul's associates in his mission to the Gentiles. Luke mentions his role several times in Acts (17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4). Paul refers to Timothy as a "fellow worker" (Romans 16:21). Two New Testament letters are addressed to Timothy personally. In several, he is listed as an author alongside of Paul. Paul has a special affection for Timothy, calling him "my son whom I love" (1 Corinthians 4:17). In Paul's mind, there is no individual quite like Timothy, whose thinking is so much like his own (Philippians 2:19-20). Timothy remains a close confidant and friend up to Paul's death. Paul even sees him as a successor who will continue his work. He is used on a number of occasions to help with Paul's pastoral and gospel-preaching responsibilities (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 6; 1 Timothy 1:3).

At some point, Timothy is ordained to the ministry. Perhaps it is at this time in Lystra. Paul says that Timothy was given a special divine ability, and the knowledge of it came as a result of divine revelation (1 Timothy 1:18). "Do not neglect your gift," Paul admonishes him, "which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you" (1 Timothy 4:14).⁴

Acts 16:2

Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

Clarke: Which was well reported of—These words are spoken of Timothy, and not of his father. At this time Timothy must have been very young; for, several years after, when appointed to superintend the Church at Crete, he appears to have been then so young that there was a danger of its operating to the prejudice of his ministry: 1 Timothy 4:12, Let no man despise thy youth. He had a very early religious education from his godly mother Eunice, and his not less pious grandmother Lois; and, from his religious instructions, was well prepared for the work to which God now called him.⁵

Barnes: Was well reported of. Was esteemed highly as a young man of piety and promise. Acts 6:3; comp. 1 Timothy 5:10. Timothy had been religiously educated. He was carefully trained in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and was therefore the better qualified for his work, 2 Timothy 3:15.⁶

LAN: 2-3 Timothy and his mother, Eunice, were from Lystra. Eunice had probably heard Paul's preaching when he was there during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-18). Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother and Greek father—to the Jews, a half-breed like a Samaritan. So Paul asked Timothy to be circumcised to remove some of the stigma he may have had with Jewish believers. Timothy was not required to be circumcised (the Jerusalem council had decided that— Acts 15), but he voluntarily did this to overcome any barriers to his witness for Christ. Sometimes we need to go beyond the minimum requirements in order to help our audience receive our testimony.

⁴ <http://www.wcg.org>

⁵ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament

⁶ Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

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.

[took and circumcised him because of the Jews] Because the Jews would not hear him preach or have anything to do with him if he was not circumcised. It did not save him or curse him for he did not go back on the gospel. Under the circumstances, to speed the gospel it was wisdom to do so. The same Paul refused to circumcise Titus because of time and circumstances (Galatians 2:3-5). Paul did his best to win the Jews (1 Cor. 9:20; Romans 9:1-3), but when it came to compromising the gospel and teaching law keeping as necessary to salvation, there he drew a line (Galatians 2:1-21).⁷

Circumcised him so as not to offend Jewish prejudices; something he would not have done if he were a Gentile, like Titus. It was for their ministries sake that they wanted him accepted by the Jewish audiences.

In Iconium, Lystra, Derbe: they were worshiped as gods; then they were stoned to death.. These were the Galatians of Paul's later letter...

Clarke: Took and circumcised him—For this simple reason, that the Jews would neither have heard him preach, nor would have any connection with him, had he been otherwise. Besides, St. Paul himself could have had no access to the Jews in any place, had they known that he associated with a person who was uncircumcised: they would have considered both to be unclean. The circumcision of Timothy was a merely prudential regulation; one rendered imperiously necessary by the circumstances in which they were then placed; and, as it was done merely in reference to this, Timothy was laid under no necessity to observe the Mosaic ritual, nor could it prejudice his spiritual state, because he did not do it in order to seek justification by the law, for this he had before, through the faith of Christ. In Galatians 2:3-5, we read that Paul refuses to circumcise Titus, who was a Greek, and his parents Gentiles, notwithstanding the entreaties of some zealous Judaizing Christians, as their object was to bring him under the yoke of the law: here, the case was widely different, and the necessity of the measure indisputable.

Barnes: And he took and circumcised him. This was evidently done to avoid the opposition and reproaches of the Jews. It was a measure not binding in itself, (comp. Acts 15:1,28,29) but the neglect of which would expose to contention and opposition among the Jews, and greatly retard or destroy his usefulness. It was an act of expediency for the sake of peace, and was in accordance with Paul's uniform and avowed principle of conduct. 1 Corinthians 9:20, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." Comp. Acts 21:23-26.

⁷ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

McGee: I want to note carefully the method of the apostle Paul. When he went up to Jerusalem, he took along Titus, a Gentile, who wasn't circumcised—and Paul wasn't about to have him circumcised. However, now Paul wants to take along Timothy as a fellow missionary. He wants Timothy to go out to reach people for Christ. Since he doesn't want any kind of argument or any reason for offense, he has Timothy circumcised. This is not because there is any merit in circumcision, but because he doesn't want it to be an issue. This is what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:19–20: “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.” Paul did this in order to break down all arguments.

Sometimes people come to me and say they want to join a certain church but that church has a different idea of baptism than they hold. They ask if they should be baptized and join the church anyway. So I ask them, “Is the church a good Bible-teaching church? Does it teach salvation only and alone through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it a place where you can serve, and be blessed, and grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth?” If they can answer yes to these questions, then I tell them to go ahead and be baptized and affiliate with that church. There are fundamentals of faith in which there can be no deviation. However, there are forms and rituals which are not essential to salvation, and I believe there is a great deal of elasticity in these areas. This was Paul's feeling. Certainly circumcision had no bearing on Timothy's salvation, but the rite was performed so that the ministry of Timothy with the Jews would not be handicapped.⁸

Him would Paul have to go forth with him—This is in harmony with all we read in the Acts and Epistles of Paul's affectionate and confiding disposition. He had no relative ties which were of service to him in his work; his companions were few and changing; and though Silas would supply the place of Barnabas, it was no weakness to yearn for the society of one who might become, what Mark once appeared to be, a *son* in the Gospel [HOWSON]. And such he indeed proved to be, the most attached and serviceable of his associates (Php 2:19–23; 1Co 4:17; 1Th 3:1–6). His double connection, with the Jews by the mother's side and the Gentiles by the father's, would strike the apostle as a peculiar qualification for his own sphere of labor. “So far as appears, Timothy is the first Gentile who after his conversion comes before us as a regular missionary; for what is said of Titus (Ga 2:3) refers to a later period” [WIES]. But before his departure, Paul⁹

because of the Jews ... for they knew all that his father was a Greek—This seems to imply that the father was no proselyte. Against the wishes of a Gentile father no Jewish mother was, as the Jews themselves say, permitted to circumcise her son. We thus see why all the religion of Timothy is traced to the female side of the family (2Ti 1:5). “Had Timothy not been circumcised, a storm would have gathered round the apostle in his farther progress. His fixed line of procedure was to act on the cities through the

⁸McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:581). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ac 16:3). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

synagogues; and to preach the Gospel to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. But such a course would have been impossible had not Timothy been circumcised. He must necessarily have been repelled by that people who endeavored once to murder Paul because they imagined he had taken a Greek into the temple (Ac 21:29). The very intercourse of social life would have been almost impossible, for it was still “an abomination” for the circumcised to eat with the uncircumcised” [HOWSON]. In refusing to compel Titus afterwards to be circumcised (Ga 2:3) at the bidding of Judaizing Christians, as necessary to salvation, he only vindicated “the truth of the Gospel” (Ga 2:5); in circumcising Timothy, “to the Jews he became as a Jew that he might gain the Jews.” Probably Timothy’s ordination took place now (1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6); and it was a service, apparently, of much solemnity—“before many witnesses” (1Ti 6:12).¹⁰

JNTC: Sha’ul ... took him and did a *b.rit-milah*, which can imply that he had an expert *mohel* (“circumciser”) perform the operation. While Sha’ul had both Jewish ritual knowledge (22:3) and at least some manual dexterity (18:3), circumcising an adult is not a simple operation and normally requires a specialist.

Because of the Jews living in those areas. A number of non-Messianic Jewish thinkers have a high regard for Yeshua. Even if they don’t acknowledge him as the Messiah they consider him to have been a good Jew whose teachings were well within the rubric of Judaism and whose life can serve as an example to all (but see Yn 5:17–18N, 14:6). It was Paul, they say, Sha’ul, who was “the villain of the piece,” he who paganized Judaism by presenting Yeshua as a man-god, diluted it by throwing out the Law, and whose opportunism stopped at nothing as he tried to win Gentiles to himself after failing to convince the Jews. The present verse can help put this canard to rest.

Sha’ul’s detractors would say that his circumcising Timothy was motivated by sheer opportunism, that he did not care a whit about the commandment itself (see 15:1) and in fact explicitly taught that circumcision didn’t matter at all (1C 7:19; Ga 5:6, 6:15), and that he circumcised Timothy only “because of” the Jews, that is, to conciliate them, so that they would not raise the issue.

But this theory conflicts with the New Testament evidence. Sha’ul himself observed the *Torah* to the end of his life (see 13:9&N for references), and he never taught Messianic Jews to stop observing it (21:20–27&NN.).

So, if “because of the Jews” does not mean to conciliate them, what does it mean? It means that even though it was not Sha’ul’s responsibility to have Timothy circumcised (see v. 1), he took it upon himself because he did not want Timothy’s uncircumcision to provoke questioning that would impede the Gospel. The Gospel itself contains the stumblingblock of the Messiah’s death (1C 1:23), and a good proclaimer of the Gospel will remove all other stumblingblocks if he can. That is the point: Sha’ul anticipated the problem and solved it.

Had Timothy been a Gentile there would have been no problem. Jews were glad to welcome Gentile “God-fearers.” It is because Timothy was in fact Jewish by virtue of having a Jewish mother, yet uncircumcised because his Gentile father had not had him circumcised (v. 1), and because this was widely known (**they all knew that his father**

¹⁰Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ac 16:3). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

was a Greek, or: “had been a Greek,” which may imply that the father was already dead), that there was danger of the Gospel’s being misrepresented as contrary to Judaism.¹¹

ESV: because of the Jews who were in those places. Paul never abandoned his Jewish heritage, and so he circumcised Timothy. It was all the more necessary if Timothy was to join his mission. He did not want to fight on nonessentials (1 Cor. 9:19–21). Paul always began in the synagogues, and to have an uncircumcised Jew with him would have made any witness to Jews much more difficult. (Since Timothy had grown up in this region, the Jews would have known of his mixed family background.)¹²

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.

[decrees] Greek: *dogma* (GSN-1378), doctrine, ordinance, judgment (Acts 16:4; Acts 17:7; Luke 2:1; Ephes. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Hebrews 11:23).

Barnes: The decrees. The decrees in regard to the four things specified in Acts 15:20,29. The word translated *decrees* occurs in Luke 2:1, "A decree from Caesar Augustus;" in Acts 17:7, "The decrees of Caesar;" in Ephesians 2:15 and in Colossians 2:14. It properly means, a law or edict of a king or legislature. In this instance it was the decision of the council in a case submitted to it; and implied an obligation on the Christians to submit to that decision. The laws of the apostles would, and ought to be, in such cases, esteemed to be binding. It is probable that a correct and attested copy of the letter, Acts 15:23-29 would be sent to the various churches of the Gentiles.

Acts 16:5

And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

[churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily] The controversy of Acts 15 had done much harm, but now the churches settled down and were established in the faith and great increase was the result.

¹¹ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 16:3). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

¹² <http://www.esvstudybible.org/search?q=Acts+16>

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,

Throughout Phrygia. This was the largest province of Asia Minor. It had Bithynia, north; Pisidia and Lycia, south; Galatia and Cappadocia, east; and Lydia and Mysia, west.

Galatia = Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in this province. (This proscribed region is where the “Seven churches” of Revelation are located.

Barnes: And the region of Galatia. This province was directly east of Phrygia. The region was formerly conquered by the Gauls. They settled in it, and called it, after their own name, *Galatia*. The Gauls invaded the country at different times, and no less than three tribes or bodies of Gauls had possession of it. Many Jews were also settled there. It was from this cause that so many parties could be formed there, and that so much controversy would arise between the Jewish and Gentile converts. See the Epistle to the Galatians.

Everything in due time... Everything in God's time

[Asia] The Asia here was not all of Asia Minor, for they had already established churches in Galatia, Phrygia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, and Pamphylia (provinces of it), but it no doubt was the Bithynia and Mysia, the northern and western parts of Asia Minor that the Holy Spirit checked them from going into at this time (Acts 16:7). He wanted them to go to other places that were more ripe for the gospel. Later these other parts were visited when they were more ready for it (1 Peter 1:1).

Barnes: In Asia. Acts 2:9. This was doubtless the region of proconsular Asia. This region was also called *Ionia*. Of this region Ephesus was the capital; and here were situated also the cities of Smyrna, Thyatira, Philadelphia, etc., within which the seven churches, mentioned in Revelation chapters 1-3, were established. Cicero speaks of proconsular Asia as containing the provinces of Phrygia, Mysia, Caria, and Lydia. In all this region the gospel was afterwards preached with great success. But now a more important and wider field was opened before Paul and Barnabas, in the extensive country of Macedonia.

Barnes: And were forbidden. Probably by a direct revelation. The reason of this was, doubtless, that it was the intention of God to extend the gospel farther into the regions of Greece than would have been done if they had remained in Asia Minor. This prohibition was the means of the first introduction of the gospel into Europe.

We don't know how the Holy Spirit told Paul that he and his companions should not go into Asia. It may have been through a prophet, a vision, an inner conviction, or some other circumstance. To know God's will does not mean we must hear his voice. He leads in different ways. When seeking God's will, (1) make sure your plan is in harmony with God's Word; (2) ask mature Christians for their advice; (3) check your own motives—are

you seeking to do what you want or what you think God wants?—and (4) pray for God to open and close the doors as he desires.

McGee: Galatia includes all this area. I am of the opinion that Paul moved into the northern part of the country at this particular point. The province of Asia is down south where Ephesus is. In fact, Ephesus was the chief city of the province of Asia. Paul may have been planning to make a circuit through Asia Minor. This was a heavily populated area in that day, and it was really the center of Greek culture. This was a great commercial area, a great political area, a great educational area. Paul would make a great circle by going through the Galatian country, then Phrygia, then south into the province of Asia, and then back again to Antioch to report to the home church.

The Spirit of God had something else in mind. We are told that the Holy Spirit forbade him to preach the Word down in Asia. That is really amazing, isn't it? Paul wanted to go there, and the Spirit of God wanted the Word of God given out, but the Spirit wanted Paul in a different place at this time. So Paul naturally thought that if he could not go south, he would go north. Bithynia was in the north, along the Black Sea. That also was a large population center, and there was a very heavy concentration of Hebrews in that area. This section is in Turkey today.

6-10 Paul endeavored to go into the provinces of Asia Minor toward the east, but answering the Macedonian call, Paul and Silas went westward into Europe. Paul's vision was strategic and historically decisive. His decision to go from Troas westward meant that Europe would receive Christianity. Paul, together with Luke, heeded the vision and immediately attempted to go into Macedonia (Acts 16:10). This is the beginning of the "we" sections of Acts. Eusebius, the fourth-century church historian, recorded traditions about the other 11 apostles (including Matthias, cf. 1:26). Some of these men probably spread the gospel to Asia, others to North Africa and possibly even to the Far East. Thomas may have reached India in the first century.¹³

Holy Spirit, Mission—The Spirit can say no. He prevented Paul from entering Asia or Bithynia. "Spirit of Jesus" appears only here in the New Testament. The Spirit is elsewhere referred to as the Spirit of Christ (Ro 8:9; 1 Pe 1:11), the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Php 1:19), and the Spirit of God's Son (see note on Gal 4:6). These phrases all indicate how closely the early church associated the Spirit with Christ. The Spirit was given to all who believed in Christ and only to those who believed in Christ. He always reminded them of Christ; He glorified Christ; He equipped the church to proclaim Christ. This association with Christ renders the Spirit knowable. He is not a vague, amorphous, pervasive Spirit in the world. He is the definite, recognizable, invasive Spirit who lives with the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. At times He tells us no so He can lead us to a greater ministry for Jesus.¹⁴

¹³ Believers Study Bible Notes

¹⁴ Disciple's Study Bible

ESV: having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. From Antioch in Pisidia Paul and Timothy traveled far northward, and then westward. Natural human wisdom would have led them to think they should preach the gospel in all the cities that they passed through, but instead the Holy Spirit directed them on a 400-mile (644-km) journey by foot to Troas (v. 8). They must have had a strong sense of the Spirit's direct guidance and concluded that he would guide others to preach the gospel in the northern regions of Asia and in Bithynia (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1, where Peter writes to churches in that region).

Acts 16:7

After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

Bithynia - southeast shore of Sea of Mamora, South shore of Black sea.

Clarke: After they were come to Mysia—They passed through Phrygia into Mysia, which lay between Bithynia on the north, Phrygia on the east, Aeolia on the south, and the Mediterranean on the west.

Clarke: But the Spirit suffered them not—God saw that that was not the most proper time to preach the word at Bithynia; as he willed them to go immediately to Macedonia, the people there being ripe for the word of life.

LAN: 7-9 The “Spirit of Jesus” is another name for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had closed the door twice for Paul, so Paul must have wondered which geographical direction to take in spreading the gospel. Then, in a vision (Acts 16:9), Paul was given definite direction, and he and his companions obediently traveled into Macedonia. The Holy Spirit guides us to the right places, but he also guides us away from the wrong places. As we seek God’s will, it is important to know what God wants us to do and where he wants us to go, but it is equally important to know what God does not want us to do and where he does not want us to go.

McGee: The Spirit forbade them to go south into the province of Asia. Then the Spirit of God forbade them to go north into Bithynia. He has come from the east. Where will he go? Well, there is only one direction left and that is west. You see, it was not Horace Greeley of *The New York Tribune* who first said, “Go west, young man, go west.” Instead it was the Spirit of God speaking to the apostle Paul!

So Paul kept going west until he came to Troas. He had to stop there because from that point he would need a ship to continue. Paul couldn’t imagine what he was to do or where he was to go from that point.

Acts 16:8

And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

Alexandreia Troas, port on coast of Mysia, 30 miles south of the Dardanelles.

Clarke: Came down to Troas—The Troad, or part of Phrygia Minor in which the celebrated city of Troy was formerly situated. This city was first built by Dardanus, who was its king, and from whom it was called Dardania; from Tros, his grandson, it was called Troja, or Troy; and from his son, Ilius, it was called Ilium. It has been long so completely destroyed that no ascertainable vestige of it remains; insomuch that some have even doubted of its existence. Those who contend for the reality of the history of Troy suppose it to have stood on the site of the modern village Bounarbachi, about twelve miles from the sea, on an eminence, at the termination of a spacious plain.

McGee: I think that if we had met Paul during the time of his delay in Troas, we could have asked him, “Paul, where are you going?” I’m sure his reply would have been, “I don’t know.” I’m afraid our next statement would have been something like this: “Now brother Paul, do you mean that the great Apostle of the Gentiles doesn’t know where he is going next? Surely you must know the will of God for your life.” Then we would have sat down for a nice long lecture on how to determine the will of God in his life. My, I’ve read so many books on that subject—it’s too bad Paul didn’t have one of those books with him at that time! Paul does not know the will of God. Why? Because the *Spirit of God* is leading him. Paul is simply waiting. It is going to take a mighty movement to get Paul out of Asia and move him over into Europe.

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.

Macedonia is across the Dardanelles; in is in Greece; it is what we would call Europe.

Barnes: Of Macedonia. This was an extensive country of Greece, having Thrace on the north, Thessaly south, Epirus west, and the Aegean Sea east. It is supposed that it was peopled by Kittim, son of Javan, Genesis 10:4. The kingdom rose into celebrity chiefly under the reign of Philip and his son Alexander the Great. It was the first region in Europe in which we have any record that the gospel was preached.

The Dardanelles is the classic dividing line between Asia and Europe.

Barnes: There stood a man, etc. The appearance of a man, who was known to be of Macedonia, probably, by his dress and language. Whether this was in a dream, or whether it was a representation made to the senses while awake it is impossible to tell. The will of God was at different times made known in both these ways. Comp. Matthew 2:12; Acts 10:3. Grotius supposes that this was the guardian angel of Macedonia, and refers for

illustration to Daniel 10:12,13,20,21. But there seems to be no foundation for this opinion.

Barnes: And help us. That is, by preaching the gospel. This was a call to preach the gospel in an extensive heathen land, amidst many trials and dangers. To this call, notwithstanding all this prospect of danger, they cheerfully responded, and gave themselves to the work. Their conduct was thus an example to the church. From all portions of the earth a similar call is now coming to the churches. Openings of a similar character, for the introduction of the gospel, are presented in all lands. Appeals are coming from every quarter; and all that seems now necessary for the speedy conversion of the world, is for the church to enter into these vast fields with the self-denial, spirit, and zeal which characterized the apostle Paul.

McGee: This is Paul's call into Macedonia. Now Macedonia is across the Aegean Sea, over in Europe. Paul is in Asia. The gospel is going to cross from Asia into Europe. The Spirit of God is moving him in that direction.

I do not know why Paul was not moved east to China. All I know is that the Spirit of God moved him west to Europe. I thank God that this is the direction he went. At that particular time my ancestors, from one side of the family, were roaming in the forests of Germany. They were pagan and they were evil, worshiping all kinds of idols. They were a low, heathen people. The other side of my family came from Scotland and perhaps my ancestors were already in Scotland at that time or came there a little later. At any rate, I am told they were the dirtiest, filthiest savages that have ever been on the topside of this earth. I thank God the gospel went to Europe to reach my people over there.

Now maybe you are smiling, thinking that your ancestors were very superior to mine. Well, you can wipe that smile off your face because your ancestors probably were living in the cave right next door to mine! They were just as dirty and just as filthy as mine were. Thank God the gospel crossed over into Europe. This was a great and significant crossing.

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.

[We] = Luke joins here. This is the first place in Acts where the writer includes himself. Was Luke the man in the vision?

[we endeavoured to go] Here is the first reference to Luke, the author of Acts. Some think he joined Paul's party at Troas.

[assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them] Taking it for granted by the vision that the Lord was leading to Macedonia.

Acts 16:11

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

[**loosing**] Greek: *anago* (GSN-321), weighed anchor (Luke 8:22; Acts 13:13; Acts 16:11; Acts 18:21; Acts 20:3,13; Acts 21:1-2; Acts 27:2,4,12,21; Acts 28:10-11,21).

Samothracia: highest in elevation of northern Aegean islands, midway between Troas and Philippi. An Aegean island which is about 20 miles around.

Neapolis: harbor of Philippi, 10 miles inland favorable wind: 2 days; later it took 5 days. The first European soil trodden by Paul with the gospel.

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.

Paul always focused on strategic centers. (He arrives about 20 years after the foundation of the church at Jerusalem.)

Philippi

Philippi: scene of decisive battle ending the Roman republic, 42 B.C.

- Brutus & Cassius, murderers of Julius Caesar, defeated by the combined forces of Mark Antony and Octavian, who later became Emperor Augustus.
- Because of their assistance, Octavian granted Roman citizenship to these Philippians when he became emperor.
- First of the district, a city of Macedonia, a colony (Amphipolis had been chief city, still a rival).
- Paul established a church here.
- It is where events of Acts 16:12-40 happened.

[Note Paul's ellipsis: "Our citizenship is in heaven..." Phil 3:20.]

Why Doesn't God Guide like in the Book of Acts?

Paul must have been puzzled:

- Quarreling with Barnabas, he parted from him;
- He wanted to preach the Gospel, so he passed through Syria and Cilicia, and came to Derbe and Lystra, and there he met Timothy.
- He wanted to go on to proconsular Asia, and he could not do it. He was sick, he was ill, an infirmity of the flesh was upon him and he could not go.
- It was necessary to that he should take another direction and he went into Galatia and preached there.
- Then he turned back again. There was no reason that he could understand. It is a picture of cross currents, of difficulty, perplexity and darkness.

- Then he felt the lure of Bithynia; he would go there.
- No, he must go west and on he went, perplexed.
- Then came the vision of the man of Macedonia; (and when he talked it over with Luke in later days, and Luke would write the story with hindsight.)
- The Spirit forbade him preaching in Asia. The Spirit of Jesus drove him ever and ever on toward Troas. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is validated by the results:
 - Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth.
- The guidance of the Spirit was subsequently recognized by these men:
 - ..not always by flaming visions;
 - ..not by words articulate in human ears;
 - but by circumstances,
 - by commonplace things,
 - by difficult things,
 - By dark things,
 - By disappointing things.
- The man the Spirit will guide is the man who is in an attitude in which it is possible for the Spirit to guide him.
 - ...an attitude of life; of loyalty to the Lord, faith in the guidance of the Spirit, and constant watchfulness.
- It is the watcher for the Lord who sees the Lord.

[chief city] It was the chief city in Paul's day. Amphipolis was the chief city when the Romans first took over the country, but after the battle at Philippi that ended the Roman republic this city became more prominent.

Barnes: And from thence to Philippi. The former name of this city was Dathos. It was repaired and adorned by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, and after him was called Philippi. It was famous for having been the place where several battles were fought in the civil wars of the Romans; and, among others, for the decisive battle between Brutus and Antony. At this place Brutus killed himself. To the church in this place Paul afterwards wrote the epistle which bears its name.

[colony] A Roman military settlement. This is a Latin word, Such colonies were settlements of old soldiers and others by Augustus to influence the native people to be loyal subjects. Hence the significance of Acts 16:37.

Inscribed on the arches outside the city of Philippi was a prohibition against bringing an unrecognized religion into the city; therefore, this prayer meeting was held outside the city, beside the river.

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*.

Ten adult male Jews needed to make a synagogue; otherwise, usually met near a body of water for prayer, fellowship, worship, ritual washings, etc. It was through a women's prayer group that the gospel entered Europe! There is no doubt that in this city there were Jews. In the time of the apostles they were scattered extensively throughout the known world.

[prayer] Greek: *proseuche* (GSN-4335), a place of prayer and worship where there was no synagogue. A spacious, uncovered amphitheatre. There were many such places among the Jews on sea sides or on rivers.

BBC: “Place of prayer” was a customary non-Palestinian Jewish term for a synagogue, but the gathering here seems to be without a building. According to Jewish pietists concerned about assimilation, a minimum of ten Jewish men was necessary to constitute a regular synagogue and thus indicate a city where Jewish people would be likely to form their own community; this number of Jewish men may not have lived in Philippi. But in places with no official synagogue, Jewish people preferred to meet in a ritually pure place near water; ritual washing of hands before prayer seems to have been standard in Diaspora Judaism, and excavations show the importance of water to synagogues.

The nearest body of flowing water, the Gangites (a tributary of the Strymon), is about one and a quarter miles from Philippi. It was thus more than a “sabbath day’s journey” by Pharisaic standards, suggesting that they were more concerned with assembling near a pure place than with the technicalities of Palestinian legal ideals. The “gate” is probably the colonial archway of the city, through which the Via Egnatia (cf. Acts 16:9) went out to the Gangites.¹⁵

[spake unto the women which resorted thither] Perhaps this was before the crowd had gathered for worship and while they were gathering.

After following the Holy Spirit’s leading into Macedonia, Paul made his first evangelistic contact with a small group of women. Paul never allowed gender or cultural boundaries to keep him from preaching the gospel. He preached to these women, and Lydia, an influential merchant, believed. This opened the way for ministry in that region. God often worked in and through women in the early church.

JNTC: We spent a few days in the city; then on *Shabbat* we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we understood a *minyan* met. The Greek words “*Prosevchê einai*” mean “where a prayer-place was”; here it is translated “where a *minyan* met.” *Prosevchê* often denotes a synagogue building, and synagogues were frequently built by running water in order to eliminate the need for constructing a *mikveh* for ritual immersion. But in this instance there is reason to suppose that there was no synagogue at the river’s edge. For when the Roman Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome (18:2&N), the Roman-controlled city of Philippi followed suit. In consequence, it is likely that a few Jews passed over by the expulsion order, along with other Jews who formerly lived in Philippi but now lived outside it nearby, did not have a building in which to meet and

¹⁵ Bible Background Commentary: New Testament

instead gathered together at the river's edge. A *minyan* ("quorum" of ten men) would have been enough for a regular synagogue service, and a modified version of the service could proceed with fewer men, or even with no men and only women, as is the case here, since Sha'ul and his companions spoke **to the women who had gathered there**.¹⁶

Spurgeon: All sorts of places have been consecrated to prayer, the field, the sea shore, a prison, and even the belly of a fish, and a fiery furnace. Among praying people the gospel is sure of a hearty welcome. It is well worthy of note that the first gospel address delivered in Europe, was heard at a prayer meeting. We ought therefore to prize this institution very highly.

ESV: Philippi seems to have had no significant Jewish population. Like Lydia, the women who attended the prayer meeting may have been God-fearers and not Jews. At least three locations among the remains of Philippi have been suggested for this **place of prayer**.

On the Sabbath (16:13)

Luke begins his account of the events in Philippi with the conversion of a woman named Lydia. Paul meets Lydia on the Sabbath day when he and the other missionaries go "outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer" (16:13). Luke is still signaling his presence by using the pronoun "we" (16:13, 16). The river, called the Gangites, is about a mile and a half west of the city.

Paul usually goes to a local synagogue on the Sabbath, where he can preach the gospel when he is asked to speak. But in Philippi, he goes to a river, suggesting that the city does not have a synagogue, probably because it does not have many resident Jews. Jewish law requires that at least ten male heads of households should be available for regular attendance before a synagogue is formed (Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 1.6). If the minimum of ten cannot be met, a place of prayer is selected for an informal Sabbath gathering in some peaceful setting, either in a building or outdoors. Those present recite the Shema, pray, read from the prophets, and discuss their readings.

If that is the situation Paul encounters at the "place of prayer" near Philippi, then possibly only women are present (16:13). As a traveling Jewish teacher, Paul is allowed to speak some words of wisdom, offer some exhortation, and deliver a blessing. This is exactly what he does (16:13).¹⁷

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.

Celebrated purple dye was made from the murex, a shellfish. (Ref. By Homer)

¹⁶Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 16:12). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

¹⁷<http://www.wcg.org>

Thyatira: inscriptions of the guild of dyers have been found at Thyatira. (Thyatira was one of the cities Paul had to omit on his way to Troas.)

[Lydia] She got her name from province of Lydia, Asia Minor, in which was located her city to Thyatira. Lydian women were famous for the manufacture of beautiful purple made from the murex, a shellfish.

Clarke: Whose heart the Lord opened—As she was a sincere worshipper of God, she was prepared to receive the heavenly truths spoken by Paul and his companions; and, as she was faithful to the grace she had received, so God gave her more grace, and gave her now a Divine conviction that what was spoken by Paul was true; and therefore she attended unto the things—she believed them and received them as the doctrines of God; and in this faith she was joined by her whole family, and in it they were all baptized.

[opened] Greek: *dianoigo* (GSN-1272), open effectually. Only in Acts 16:14; Acts 17:3; Mark 7:34-35; Luke 2:23; Luke 24:31-32,45. Some people are honest and yield to the Lord to open their hearts and others refuse all offers of God's dealings and are hardened.

The city of Thyatira. This was a city of Lydia, in Asia Minor, now called *Ak-hisar*. The art of dying was particularly cultivated, as appears from an inscription found there.

BBC: Conservative Roman writers often complained that women pursued religions from the eastern Mediterranean, and Josephus attests that tremendous numbers of women (far more than men) were attracted to Judaism. The sphere of religion was the one sphere in Greek culture where women were given some public responsibility, and the Diana cult in Philippi may have made women more prominent than in other Greek centers (Macedonian women traditionally exercised more freedom than Greek women). But Greek religion consisted of ritual, not teaching; thus these women would have had little training in the law and would welcome Paul's teaching—although his teaching a group of women might violate traditional Palestinian protocol.

The name "Lydia," though common, would be especially natural for a woman from Thyatira, which was in the region of ancient Lydia. Thyatira was known for its dyers' guilds and textiles, and inscriptions show that other Thyatiran business agents also sold purple dye in Macedonia, becoming prosperous (although Macedonians, like inhabitants of most of the Empire, were generally poor, Macedonia had historically been one of the more prosperous provinces). Her name and trade may indicate that she was a freedwoman (former slave); many traders in purple dye were freedwomen who continued to work as agents of their former masters' businesses.

Luke highlights the stories of three individuals who became believers through Paul's ministry in Philippi: Lydia, the influential businesswoman (Acts 16:14), the demon-possessed slave girl (Acts 16:16-18), and the jailer (Acts 16:27-30). The gospel was affecting all strata of society, just as it does today.

Spurgeon: The apostle did not bring crowds to Jesus on this occasion, yet was he amply repaid by the conversion of this one woman, whom providence had brought there in the course of her business, on purpose that she might be saved. Observe that it was not Paul who converted her, but the Lord himself. Paul would have knocked at the door of her heart in vain, if he who has the key of all hearts had not opened it. Lord, open all our hearts to give attention to thy word.

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.

[Constrained] - only here and at Emmaus Road...

Note the victory: Phil 1:3; 4:15.

[household] Ten Whole Households Saved

1. Nobleman (John 4:53)
2. Cornelius (Acts 10:24-48; Acts 11:14)
3. Lydia (Acts 16:15)
4. Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31-34)
5. Justus (Acts 18:7)
6. Crispus (Acts 18:8)
7. Aristobulus (Romans 16:10)
8. Narcissus (Romans 16:11)
9. Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16; 1 Cor. 16:15)
10. Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 4:19)

[constrained] Greek: *parabiazomai* (GSN-3849), to constrain one by entreaties (Acts 16:15; Luke 24:29; cp. Genesis 19:9; 1 Samuel 28:23). Hindered in preaching in Asia (Acts 16:6), their first convert in Europe was an Asian.

BBC: By this period, some women were engaged in business; even slave women could become managers, just like slave men. Lydia probably did not gain wealth by becoming a widow; Roman law allowed a widow to inherit only 10 percent, although widows could inherit more than that from a deceased father. More than likely Lydia is well-to-do as a seller of purple, a luxury good associated with wealth throughout Mediterranean culture for over a thousand years. (The dye had been especially procured from the murex shellfish near Tyre, but in Macedonia it could have been procured from the mollusks near Thessalonica.) Well-to-do women sometimes became patrons, or sponsors, of pagan religious associations; those attracted to Judaism helped support Jewish causes.

Paul and his companions may have been staying at an inn till the sabbath, but Lydia immediately offers the proper Jewish hospitality and invites the apostles into her home, thus serving as a patron of their work (cf. 1 Kings 17:13-24; especially 2 Kings 4:8-11). She appears to be the head of a household consisting mainly of servants, but it is also

possible that she is married to a husband who simply leaves her religious activities alone (contrast the usual custom in Acts 16:31-32; cf. 2 Kings 4:8-23).

McGee: We do not know anything about Mr. Lydia, but he must have been around there somewhere. There are families like that, you know, where the woman is the dominant one in the family. Apparently that was the way it was in the family of Lydia. Thank God she was that kind of woman because her entire household turned to God through her witness. And now we find Paul and his group staying at her home and boarding there. I would assume she was a person of means and was able to take care of them.

And when ... baptized ... and her household—probably without much delay. The mention of baptism here for the first time in connection with the labors of Paul, while it was doubtless performed on all his former converts, indicates a special importance in this first European baptism. Here also is the first mention of a Christian *household*. Whether it included children, also in that case baptized, is not explicitly stated; but the presumption, as in other cases of household baptism, is that it did. Yet the question of infant baptism must be determined on other grounds; and such incidental allusions form only part of the historical materials for ascertaining the practice of the Church.¹⁸

Ordinances, Baptismal Candidate—The household baptisms in Acts raise the question whether babies or other nonbelievers were baptized. We certainly may suppose that there were babies, small children, slaves, and others in some of these households. Luke is very consistent: in every case he mentions that those who believed, or those who received his word, were baptized. In v. 14, the Lord opened Lydia's heart to receive Paul's message; and in v. 15, she identified herself as a "believer in the Lord." Baptism is the outward sign of this inward belief in the Lord Jesus. Only believers are proper subjects for baptism. Compare v. 31; 18:8; 1 Co 1:16.¹⁹

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:

"A spirit, a Python" - Python = (Greek mythology) serpent destroyed by Apollo, who was hence called Pythius; a priestess at the famous temple at Delphi was called the Pythoness. Term Python became equivalent to soothsaying demon (today's "channel", et al.) She was Apollo's "channel" (nothing "new" about the "New Age.")

Miracle, Redemption—Miracles redeem people physically, providing opportunity for useful life. They often do more. The poor afflicted girl was a slave, exploited by her owners. It is widely supposed that she had the ability of

¹⁸Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ac 16:15). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

¹⁹ Disciple's Study Bible

ventriloquism (Greek *puthon*) and was emotionally, if not mentally, deranged. Her cries proved troublesome, and Paul commanded the spirit to come out of her. She was healed immediately, freed from her derangement—a redeemed personality. The result: Paul and Silas found they needed to be redeemed from prison. Their imprisonment led to a further miracle and a marvelous witnessing opportunity.²⁰

2 Cor 2:11; 1 Tim 4:1-3.

[went to prayer] Went into the proseuche (GSN-4335), place of prayer (note ^a, □ Acts 16:13). Thus, not in the act of prayer, but the place of worship for the purpose of reading the prophets and prayer. The apostles spent many days here preaching the gospel (Acts 16:18).

[a spirit of divination] Greek: spirit of python, or Apollo. Pytho was, according to fable, a huge serpent that had an oracle on Mt. Parnassus, famous for predicting future events. Apollo slew this serpent and was called Pythius, becoming celebrated as the foreteller of events. It was believed that all who pretended to foretell events were influenced by the spirit of Apollo Pythius. A priestess at his temple was called Pythoness. Through her, messages were delivered.

[Soothsaying] same as witchcraft (Isaiah 2:6; Daniel 2:27; Daniel 4:7; Daniel 5:7,11; Micah 5:12).

McGee: Don't think this was just foolish superstition. This girl was possessed by a demon. We are seeing a resurgence of demonism in our own day. I have before me now a letter from a Christian woman in El Paso, Texas. She got tied up in spiritism by just fooling around with it, not thinking that it was dangerous. She has quite a story. It was hearing the Word of God through our radio program that delivered her from it. She cried out to God, and He delivered her. Demonism is a reality. This girl in Paul's day was demon possessed. She was a slave girl and her masters were using her to make a big profit. The Mafia had already begun in those days.

This “spirit of divination” is *pneuma puthona* (Gk.), meaning “spirit of python.” Python was the serpent at Delphi destroyed by Apollo. Apollo was known as Pythios Apollo, his female priestess at Delphi being called Pythia. Apollo was properly suggested in this verse, since he was the mythical god of prophecy. About A.D. 50-100, Plutarch maintained that the term *puthognes* applied to ventriloquists, and earlier in the LXX those having familiar spirits were called ventriloquists (Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27; including the witch of En Dor in 1 Sam 28:7). It is possible, therefore, that the slave girl had this same spirit of divination, probably a demonic one, for the girl “brought her masters much profit

²⁰ Disciple's Study Bible

by fortune-telling.” The exorcism caused the girl’s owners to make charges which resulted in the jailing of Paul and Silas.²¹

²²**Evangelism, In the Marketplace**—Paul seized every opportunity to minister the gospel of Christ and excluded no one from hearing the message. This example of the demon-possessed woman is a classic example of evangelism in the marketplace, that is, witnessing in the daily routine of life. It was costly to Paul. He was thrown in prison. Even that resulted in the conversion of the Philippian jailer and his family. God honors witnessing in the marketplace of life.

ESV: a spirit of divination. A demonic spirit who gave information to the slave girl so that she could tell people secrets about their lives. **Fortune-telling** was forbidden to God’s people in the OT (cf. Deut. 18:10; 1 Sam. 28:8; 2 Kings 17:17; Mic. 3:11). The Greek OT (Septuagint) uses the same Greek verb for fortune-telling (*manteuomai*) that is used in this verse.

Acts 16:17

The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

Occult is always motivated by self-interest.

Even “truth” is used to “suck them in”; soon it is mixed with error,... etc. On each previous occasion (Mark & Luke), Jesus commanded the acknowledging demon to silence.

[These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation] Every word of this is truth, but the purpose of Satan in it was to discredit the message of the apostles by making the people think that they were in league with demons who were making this announcement through a demon-possessed medium. The people would conclude that they were doing miracles by the devil and so discount the gospel. When the demon was cast out in the name of Jesus it proved that they were of God and not of demons (Acts 16:18).

[Most High God] is a common designation for God in Jewish texts but also occurs in pagan sources for Zeus or for the Jewish God with whom pagans sometimes identified Zeus. Magical texts show that pagans respected this supreme God, typically identified with the Jewish God, as the most powerful.

What the slave girl said was true, although the source of her knowledge was a demon. Why did a demon announce the truth about Paul, and why did this annoy Paul? If Paul accepted the demon’s words, he would appear to be linking the gospel with demon-

²¹ Believer’s Study Bible Notes

²² Disciple’s Study Bible

related activities. This would damage his message about Christ. Truth and evil do not mix.

From this passage we learn: (1) Demons can perform apparently useful services (v. 16). (2) They can tell the truth if it serves their purpose (v. 17), even though their ruler, Satan, is “the inventor of the lie” (Yn 8:44). (3) Nevertheless, their object is to interfere with the Gospel (v. 18). (4) Powerful and remarkable as they are, demons must submit to the authority of Yeshua the Messiah (v. 18, Mk 1:23–27). Note that in expelling the demon Sha’ul does not address the girl but the demon, and he does not rely on his own authority but that of Yeshua (contrast 19:13–16&NN).²³

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.

“Annoyed” = deeply troubled.

If our infiltration doesn’t work, then direct oppression. Outright violence demonstrates that one of the enemy’s strongholds was being attacked (2 Cor 10:4; Eph 6).

Note that her statements were true. The occult is always motivated by its own self-interests (here her owners monetary gain). Here even more insidious is that the occult is an arm, an agency, an organization which is under Satan’s command. The damage here is taking a bit of truth and slowly turning off course.

Paul saw the purpose of Satan, so turned to the demon, not the girl, and commanded it to come out and it did so.

Clarke: I command thee, in the name of Jesus—Jesus is the Savior; Satan is Abaddon and Apollyon, the destroyer. The sovereign Savior says to the destroyer, Come out of her; and he came out in the same hour. Every circumstance of this case proves it to have been a real possession. We have already had several opportunities of remarking the great accuracy of St. Luke in his accounts of demoniacs: his education as a physician gave him advantages to detect imposture of this kind where it subsisted; but he sees none in this case. He speaks of the spirit and the damsel as distinct persons. The damsel had a spirit of divination. Paul turned to the spirit, and said, I command THEE to come out of HER; and he came out in the same hour. Had not St. Luke considered this as a real case of diabolic possession, he has made use of the most improper language he could choose; language and forms of speech calculated to deceive all his readers, and cause them to believe a lie. But it is impossible that the holy apostle could do so, because he was a good man; and it is not likely he could be deceived by a parcel of charlatans, because he was a wise man;

²³Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 16:16). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

and it would be absurd to suppose that, while he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he could be imposed on by the cunning of even the devil himself.

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,

[masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone] They no doubt saw the demon rend her in coming out, as in Mark 9:26; Luke 9:42; Acts 8:7. They knew that their gains were gone, so they dragged the apostles before the Roman rulers in the market place where courts were held.

Clarke: When her masters saw—It appears she was maintained by some men, who received a certain pay from every person whose fortune she told, or to whom she made any discovery of stolen goods, etc., etc.

Barnes: The hope of their gains was gone. It was this that troubled and enraged them. And this is as likely to enrage men as anything. Instead of regarding the act as proof of Divine power, they were intent only on their profits. And their indignation furnishes a remarkable illustration of the fixedness with which men will regard wealth; of the fact that the love of it will blind them to all the truths of religion, and all the proofs of the power and presence of God; and of the fact that any interposition of Divine power that destroys their hopes of gain, fills them with wrath and hatred and murmuring. Many a man has been opposed to God and his gospel, because, if religion should be extensively prevalent, the hopes of gain would be gone. Many a slave-dealer, and many a trafficker in ardent spirits, and many a man engaged in other unlawful modes of gain, have been unwilling to abandon their employments, simply because the hopes of their gain would be destroyed. No small part of the opposition to the gospel arises from the fact, that, if embraced, it would strike at so much of the dishonourable employments of men, and make them honest and conscientious.

The slave girl's owners were upset by their loss of profit. Throughout Acts, the profit motive often works against the gospel—with Simon the magician (8:18–24), Elymas (13:8–12), and Demetrius the silversmith (19:24).

Acts 16:20

And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

[magistrates] Greek: *strategos* (GSN-4755), Roman army commanders or rulers of the Roman colony who bore title like praetors (at Rome), for which *strategos* is the Greek rendering (Acts 16:20-38; Acts 4:1; Acts 5:24-26; Luke 22:4,52).

[Jews] Paul was a Benjamite (Phil. 3:5) and others were of other tribes but all were Jews, proving that tribes other than Judah were Jews (Galatians 2:13-15).

Barnes: Do exceedingly trouble our city. In what way they did it, they specify in the next verse. The charge which they wished to substantiate was that of being disturbers of the public peace. All at once they became conscientious. They forgot the subject of their gains, and were greatly distressed about the violation of the laws. There is nothing that will make men more hypocritically conscientious, than to denounce, and detect, and destroy their unlawful and dishonest practices. Men who are thus exposed become suddenly filled with reverence for the law, or for religion; and they, who have heretofore cared nothing for either, become greatly alarmed lest the public peace should be disturbed. Men slumber quietly in sin, and pursue their wicked gains; they hate or despise all law and all forms of religion; but the moment their course of life is attacked and exposed, they become full of zeal for laws that they would not themselves hesitate to violate, and for the customs of religion, which in their hearts they thoroughly despise. Worldly-minded men often thus complain that their towns, and cities, and villages, are disturbed by revivals of religion; and the preaching of the truth, and attacking vice, often arouses this hypocritical conscientiousness, and makes them alarmed for the laws, and for religion, and for order, which they at other times are the first to disturb and disregard.

BBC: The Jewish-Roman contrast (Acts 16:20-21) is a taste of common ancient anti-Judaism, although the assumption that one could not be both Jewish and Roman will not hold up in this case (Acts 16:37). Proponents of traditional ways always demanded avoidance of new or alien gods, and one of the main complaints Romans brought against Jews was that they were always converting people to their religion. Although the Jewish population of Philippi was very small, there was a large native non-Roman population, and other immigrants from the East had settled there, increasing official xenophobia (fear of foreigners).

Acts 16:21

And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

[which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans] Romans were very zealous for their national worship. Great care was taken that no one introduce a new religion. On this account Jews were banished from Rome. This was the charge against the apostles here.

Barnes: And teach customs. The word customs here (εθη) refers to religious rites or forms of worship. Acts 6:14. They meant to charge the apostles with introducing a new mode of worship and a new religion, which was unauthorized by the Roman laws. This was a cunning and artful accusation. It is perfectly evident that they cared nothing either for the religion of the Romans or of the Jews. Nor were they really concerned about any change of religion. Paul had destroyed their hopes of gain; and as they could not prevent that except by securing his punishment or expulsion, and as they had no way of revenge

except by endeavouring to excite indignation against him and Silas for violating the laws, they endeavoured to convict them of such violation. This is one, among many instances, where wicked and unprincipled men will endeavour to make religion the means of promoting their Own interest. If they can make money by it, they will become its professed friends; or if they can annoy Christians, they will at once have remarkable zeal for the laws and for the purity of religion. Many a man opposes revivals of religion and the real progress of evangelical piety, from professed zeal for truth and order.

And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans—Here also there was a measure of truth; as the introduction of new gods was forbidden by the laws, and this might be thought to apply to any change of religion. But the whole charge was pure hypocrisy; for as these men would have let the missionaries preach what religion they pleased if they had not dried up the source of their gains, so they conceal the real cause of their rage under color of a zeal for religion, and law, and good order: so Ac 17:6, 7.²⁴

Acts 16:22

And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*.

The lectors who attend on the praetors carried rods or staves for the purpose, and were called rod-bearers (2 Cor 10:3-4).

[beat] Greek: *rhabdizo* (GSN-4463), to beat with rods, which was the Roman method of treating a criminal (2 Cor. 11:25). Jews gave only 39 stripes, but Romans had no such law. They gave as many as they chose. This is referred to by Paul in 2 Cor. 11:23, "stripes above measure" or moderation.

Barnes: **And the multitude**, etc. It is evident that this was done in a popular tumult, and without even the form of law. Of this, Paul afterwards justly complained, as it was a violation of the privileges of a Roman citizen, and contrary to the laws. Acts 16:37. It was one instance in which men affect great zeal for the honour of the law, and yet are among the first to disregard it.

Barnes: **Rent off their clothes.** This was always done when one was to be scourged or whipped. The criminal was usually stripped entirely naked. Livy says, (ii. 5,) "The lictors, being sent to inflict punishment, beat them with rods, being naked." Cicero against Vetres says, "He commanded the man to be seized, and to be stripped naked in the midst of the forum, and to be bound, and rods to be brought."

And commanded to beat them. To beat them with rods. This was done by *lictors*, whose office it was, and was a common mode of punishment among the Romans.

²⁴Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ac 16:21). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Probably Paul alludes to this when he says, (2 Corinthians 11:25,) "Thrice was I beaten with rods."

BBC: Unless the accused were Roman citizens, they were normally beaten before the trial as a means of securing evidence (this was called the *coercitio*); in practice, lower-class persons had few legal protections. Roman magistrates' attendants, called lictors, carried rods in bundles, and with these rods they beat the foreigners here. Sometimes, as here, the accused were stripped first. Public beatings served not only to secure evidence but also to humiliate those beaten and to discourage their followers.

ESV: Responding to the unruly **crowd**, the **magistrates** had Paul and Silas stripped **and gave orders to beat them with rods**. The magistrates in Roman cities were served by attendants who carried bundles of wooden rods bound together as symbols of the magistrates' authority and their right to inflict corporal punishment. Paul and Silas were severely beaten with these wooden rods (v. 23; cf. 2 Cor. 11:25). The entire process was a miscarriage of justice, since there was no fair hearing to ascertain the facts or to allow Paul and Silas to speak in their own defense. In 1 Thess. 2:2, Paul says he was "shamefully treated at Philippi."

Acts 16:23

And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

[**jailor**] Greek: desmophulax (GSN-1200), keeper of the prison. Only here and in Acts 16:27,36.

Barnes: **And when they had laid many stripes upon them.** The Jews were by law prohibited from inflicting more than forty stripes, and usually inflicted but thirty-nine, 2 Corinthians 11:24. But there was no such law among the Romans. They were unrestricted in regard to the number of lashes; and probably inflicted many more. Perhaps Paul refers to this when he says, (2 Corinthians 11:23,) "In stripes above measure," i. e., beyond the usual measure among the Jews, or beyond moderation.

Acts 16:24

Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

[**the inner prison**] Perhaps what we call the dungeon.

[**stocks**] Roman stocks were not only made to keep one from escape, but were made with holes wide enough apart so as to stretch the legs and bruise the feet to cause great pain and injury. This with the stripes beyond moderation made them suffer agony. But in spite of this they could sing and pray (Acts 16:25). The prisoners heard them.

Acts 16:25

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

Adoration and worship. (Not, “deliver your servants.” etc.) Cf. Ps 113; 115:11; 116:3,4,15,17; 118:6, 29; 114:7.

A concert that was so successful that it brought the house down! Other prisoners “attentively listening...”

Suffering is part of the program (Phil 1:29).

Clarke: At midnight Paul and Silas—sang praises—Though these holy men felt much, and had reason to fear more, yet they are undismayed, and even happy in their sufferings: they were so fully satisfied that they were right, and had done their duty, that there was no room for regret or self-reproach. At the same times they had such consolations from God as could render any circumstances not only tolerable, but delightful. They prayed, first, for grace to support them, and for pardon and salvation for their persecutors; and then, secondly, sang praises to God, who had called them to such a state of salvation, and had accounted them worthy to suffer shame for the testimony of Jesus. And, although they were in the inner prison, they sang so loud and so heartily that the prisoners heard them.

The Greek word for “singing” is from *humneo*, from which we get our word “hymn.” The prisoners and the guards undoubtedly heard much about Christ and His saving gospel through the hymns of Paul and Silas, as well as through their testimony of rejoicing in the midst of suffering.

Evangelism, Persecution—Paul and Silas were in the Philippian dungeon because of their faithful witness to Christ. Evangelization in the Spirit often brings persecution. In the midst of physical suffering, the men had positive spirits. They sang and prayed at midnight. God honors that spirit and attitude. The Lord sent deliverance and conversion as a result. God’s people use hard times as God’s opportunity for evangelism. Leading people to ask the right questions and directing them to Jesus is the proper procedure.²⁵

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.

“Jailhouse Rock”

²⁵ Disciple’s Study Bible

God answered their prayers by sending a great earthquake, opening all doors, and loosing all bonds on prisoners.

Clarke: There was a great earthquake—Thus God bore a miraculous testimony of approbation to his servants; and, by the earthquake, and loosing the bonds of the prisoners, showed, in a symbolical way, the nature of that religion which they preached: while it shakes and terrifies the guilty, it proclaims deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that are bound; and sets at liberty them that are bruised.

Clarke: Every one's bands were loosed—And yet so eminently did God's providence conduct every thing, that not one of the prisoners made his escape, though the doors were open, and his bolts off!

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.

Certificate of Debt—prison guards were responsible for the sentences of their prisoners, if one escaped, they would have to pay the debt. When prisoners were done with their time, the court would sign their Certificate of Debt as “Paid in Full” (*Tetelestai*).

Thus, this jailer was going to kill himself as he thought all the prisoners were gone, and thus, he himself would have to fulfill all their sentences! Jailers were responsible for prisoners, under the penalty of death. This one chose suicide rather than face the death that he feared at the hands of the Romans.

McGee: Let's look at this Philippian jailer for a moment. He was responsible for those prisoners. He naturally assumed that if the doors were open and the chains lying loose, the prisoners would be gone. He would be responsible for their escape and would have to forfeit his own life. So he stands there, poised, ready to fall on his own sword. When a man is in a position like that, he thinks about eternity. This man did just that, as his question to Paul indicates.

Acts 16:28

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

[Do thyself no harm] Either Paul saw the jailer by a light on the wall of the jailer's apartment or had knowledge of what he intended to do, so called out not to harm himself.

Acts 16:29

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

Irony: stocks become their throne; their jailer lies suppliant at their feet!

[fell down before Paul and Silas] When he had got a light he examined to see if what Paul had said was true. He then fell down before the apostles, realizing they were the ones responsible for all these miracles.

Then he called for a light. Greek, *Lights*, in the plural. Probably several torches were brought by his attendants.

Acts 16:30

And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

[Sirs] = “Lords...” Jailer is the first male convert in Philippi, first in Europe. [Was he the Macedonian in the vision?]

This is Question 48. The next question is in Acts 16:37. One of the most used texts of Scripture by soul winners (Acts 16:30-31).

Household is saved when they believe. (Not just saved because he was; they were saved because they all believed.)

Clarke: What must I do to be saved?—Whether this regard personal or eternal safety, it is a question the most interesting to man. But it is not likely that the jailor referred here to his personal safety. He had seen, notwithstanding the prison doors had been miraculously opened, and the bonds of the prisoners all loosed, that not one of them had escaped: hence he could not feel himself in danger of losing his life on this account; and consequently it cannot be his personal safety about which he inquires. He could not but have known that these apostles had been preaching among the people what they called the doctrine of salvation; and he knew that for expelling a demon they were delivered into his custody: the Spirit of God had now convinced his heart that he was lost, and needed salvation; and therefore his earnest inquiry is how he should obtain it. The answer of the apostles to the jailor shows that his inquiry was not about his personal safety; as his believing on Jesus Christ could have had no effect upon that, in his present circumstances. Men who dispute against this sense of the word are not aware that the Spirit of God can teach any thing to a heart, which the head of a person has not previously learned. Therefore, they say it was impossible that a heathen could make such an inquiry in reference to his eternal state, because he could know nothing about it. On this ground, how impertinent would the answer of the apostles have been: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be put in a state of PERSONAL SAFETY, and thy family! I contend that neither he nor his family were in any danger, as long as not one prisoner had escaped; he had, therefore, nothing from this quarter to fear; and, on the ground against

which I contend, his own question would have been as impertinent as the apostles' answer.

Acts 16:31

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

[Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved] This is the simple way to get saved when one is under conviction of sin and as desperate as this man was. It is not a formal confession of a historical fact that is uttered here, but that kind of faith that will surrender all to God and believe with the heart the truth that is known (Romans 10:9-10). A formal mental acceptance of Jesus any place at anytime will not save the soul. It must be a genuine heartfelt transaction of repentance and faith (Ephes. 2:8-9; 1 John 1:9). It would be vain to ask a man to do this who was not willing and ready to do it and who had not been convicted of sin and knew his need.

Barnes: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a simple, a plain, and an effectual direction. They did not direct him to use the means of grace, to pray, or to continue to seek for salvation. They did not advise him to delay, or to wait for the mercy of God. They told him to believe at once; to commit his agitated, and guilty, and troubled spirit to the Saviour, with the assurance that he should find peace. They presumed that he would understand what it was to believe; and they commanded him *to do the thing*. And this was the uniform direction which the early preachers gave to those inquiring the way to life. Matthew 16:16; comp. Acts 8:22.

[and thy house] The whole house must believe and meet the same terms for all of it to be saved (Matthew 18:3; John 3:3,5).

Barnes: And thy house. And thy family. That is, the same salvation is equally adapted to, and offered to your family. It does not mean that his family would be saved simply by his believing; but that the offers had reference to them as well as to himself; that they might be saved as well as he. His attention was thus called at once, as every man's should be, to his family. He was reminded that they needed salvation; and he was presented with the assurance that they might unite with him in the peace and joy of redeeming mercy. Comp. Acts 2:39. It may be implied here that the faith of a father may be expected to be the means of the salvation of his family. It often is so, in fact. But the direct meaning of this is, that salvation was offered to his family as well as himself; implying that if they believed, they should also be saved.

Paul and Silas took the family unit seriously. So the offer of salvation was made to the jailer's entire household—family and servants. Yet it was not the jailer's faith that saved them; they all needed to come to Jesus in faith and believe in him in the same way the jailer had. Yet his entire family did believe and all were saved. Pray that God will use you to introduce Jesus to your family and that they will come to believe in him.

Only once in the N.T. is the question asked categorically, “What must I do to be saved?” (v. 30). The response, “believe,” involved turning to Christ. A necessary action for true belief in Christ is repentance, for Jesus said, “no; but, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Repentance and belief are, therefore, two sides of the same coin. The phrase “your house,” or its equivalent, occurs three times (vv. 31-34). This might tend to minimize the purely personal nature of the divine-human encounter if it were not for several factors: (1) Paul’s use of the singular in exhorting the jailer to believe; (2) Paul’s emphasis on the intensely personal nature of faith; (3) the rich Jewish tradition which assumed that what the head of the family did would be followed by the members; and (4) the plain language which indicated that the teaching and preaching which Paul did was to all members of the household as well as to the jailer. Thus, all members were of an age qualifying them for responsible faith.²⁶

Acts 16:32

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

[**spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house**] The Word of God was preached to the whole house and the way of salvation was made clear. All in the house did accept the gospel and were baptized (Acts 16:32-33). To use this to prove that baptism does not mean immersion and Paul christened the children and babies in this house and that of Lydia (Acts 16:15) is proving too much. Nothing is known of either family or how they were baptized unless it was as in all other cases (□ Matthew 3:6, note). There is no statement that there was not enough water at hand to immerse these families. There was a river near by in one case (Acts 16:13-15).

Ordinances, Baptismal Candidate—The candidate, or person being baptized, was required to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This requirement is stated three different times: (1) you and anyone in your house who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved; (2) they preached the “word of the Lord” to all who were in his house; (3) the jailer and everyone in his family came to believe in God. It is certain that other family members were not saved because the jailer believed, since that would contradict the explicit preaching of the word of God to each one and the believing of each one in the house.²⁷

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.

Barnes: And he took them. To a convenient place for washing. It is evident from this, that though the apostles had the gift of miracles, that they did not exercise it in regard to

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their own sufferings, or to heal their own wounds. They restored others to health, not themselves.

Barnes: And washed their stripes. The wounds which had been inflicted by the severe scourging which they had received the night before. We have here a remarkable instance of the effect of religion in producing humanity and tenderness. This same man, a few hours before, had thrust them into the inner prison, and made them fast in the stocks. He evidently had then no concern about their stripes or their wounds. But no sooner was he converted, and his heart changed, than one of his first acts was an act of humanity. He saw them suffering; he pitied them, and hastened to minister to them, and to heal their wounds. Till the time of Christianity there never had been an hospital or an almshouse. Nearly all the hospitals for the sick since have been reared by Christians. They who are most ready to minister to the sick and dying are Christians. They who are willing to encounter the pestilential damps of dungeons to aid the prisoner, are, like Howard, Christians. Who ever saw an infidel attending a dying bed, if he could help it? and where has infidelity ever reared a hospital or an almshouse, or made provision for the widow and the fatherless? Often one of the most striking changes that occurs in conversion is seen in the disposition to be kind and humane to the suffering. Comp. James 1:27.

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.

Clarke: He set meat before them—They were sufficiently exhausted, and needed refreshment; nor had the apostles any such inherent miraculous power as could prevent them from suffering through hunger, or enable them to heal their own grounds. As they were the instruments of bringing health to his soul, he became the instrument of health to their bodies. Genuine faith in Christ will always be accompanied with benevolence and humanity, and every fruit that such dispositions can produce. The jailor believed—brought them into his house—washed their stripes—and set meat before them.

Barnes: With all his house. With all his family. Whether they believed *before* they were baptized, or *after*, is not declared. But the whole narrative would lead us to suppose, that as soon as the jailer believed, he and all his family were baptized. It is subsequently added, that they believed also. The *joy* arose from the fact that they all believed the gospel; the *baptism* appears to have been performed on account of the faith of the head of the family.

Acts 16:35

And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

[**serjeants**] Greek: *rhabdouchos* (GSN-4465), lictors who beat with rods (see Acts 16:22). They preceded consuls and carried the fasces, a bundle of rods bound to the handle of a hatchet.

[**Let those men go**] The Codex Bezae says that the magistrates came into court in the morning and remembering the earthquake were afraid, so sent to let the apostles go.

Barnes: And when it was day, etc. It is evident, from the narrative, that it was not contemplated at first to release them so soon, Acts 16:22-24. But it is not known what produced this change of purpose in the magistrates. It is probable, however, that they had been brought to reflection, somewhat as the jailer had, by the earthquake; and that their consciences had been troubled by the fact, that, in order to please the multitude, they had caused strangers to be beaten and imprisoned without trial, and contrary to the Roman laws. An earthquake is always fitted to alarm the guilty; and among the Romans it was regarded as an omen of the anger of the gods, and was therefore fitted to produce agitation and remorse. Their agitation and alarm were shown by the fact that they sent the officers *as soon* as it was day. The judgments of God are eminently adapted to alarm sinners. Two ancient Mss. read this, "The magistrates, *who were alarmed by the earthquake*, sent," etc.- (*Doddridge*.) Whether this reading be genuine or not, it doubtless expresses the true cause of their sending to release the apostles.

The magistrates could have regarded the earthquake as a sign, perhaps from the gods or dangerous magicians; then again, the intercession of wealthy Lydia may have helped; or perhaps the magistrates felt that public humiliation would have been sufficient to silence the troublemakers.

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.

Roman citizens were entitled to trial, and should never have been beaten or imprisoned without due process. Imprisoning Romans without due process exposed them all to jail or worse!

[**being Romans, and have cast us into prison**] It was unlawful for any Roman citizen to be bound or beaten without proper trial or be put to death without an appeal to Caesar. Paul's strategy was to teach these magistrates a lesson and to show the people that they had been unjustly condemned, and that the majesty of Rome had been insulted by this treatment of them.

[**now do they thrust us out privily?**] This is question 49 in the Book of Acts the next question is in Acts 17:18.

Barnes: They have beaten us openly uncondemned. There are three aggravating circumstances mentioned, of which Paul complains.

(1.) That they had been beaten, contrary to the Roman laws.

(2.) That it had been public; the disgrace had been in the presence of the people, and the reparation ought to be as public. And

(3) That it had been done without a trial, and while they were uncondemned and therefore the magistrates ought themselves to come and release them, and thus publicly acknowledge their error. Paul knew the privileges of a Roman citizen; and at proper times, when the interests of justice and religion required it, he did not hesitate to assert them. In all this he understood and accorded with the Roman laws. The Valerian law declared, that if a citizen appealed from the magistrate to the people, it should not be lawful for the magistrate to beat him with rods, or to behead him. (Plutarch, Life of P. Valeflus Publicola. Livy, ii. 8.) By the Porcian law, it was expressly forbidden that a citizen should be beaten, (Livy, iv. 9.) Cicero (Pro. Rabir. chap. 4) says, that the body of every Roman citizen was inviolable. "The Porcian law," he adds, "has removed the rod from the body of every Roman citizen." And in his celebrated oration against Verres, he says, "A Roman citizen was beaten with rods in the forum, O judges; where, in the mean time, no groan, no other voice of this unhappy man was heard, except the cry, 'I am a Roman citizen'-Take away this hope," he says, "take away this defence from the Roman citizens-let there be no protection in the cry, *I am a Roman citizen*-and the praetor can with impunity inflict any punishment on him who declares himself a citizen of Rome," etc.

Paul refused to take his freedom and run. He wanted to teach the rulers in Philippi a lesson and to protect the other believers from the treatment he and Silas had received. The word would spread that Paul and Silas had been found innocent and freed by the leaders, expressing the truth that believers should not be persecuted—especially if they were Roman citizens.

Christian Ethics, Church and State—The appeal of Paul and Silas on the grounds of their Roman citizenship provides a good example of making the government watch out for its citizens, part of its God-ordained responsibility on behalf of justice. Governments should establish a system of justice that prevents punishment of people for carrying out religious and evangelistic activities. Free exercise of religion should be every citizen's right. This scriptural standpoint is not shared, however, by systems which do not recognize God. In such societies Christians need to work to change the system while being prepared to endure the legal punishments of the system.²⁸

²⁸ Disciple's Study Bible

Acts 16:38

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

[feared, when they heard that they were Romans] They had a right to fear, for if this case was taken to Rome they would be deposed or probably executed for this violation of Roman law. Romans were zealous in protecting their citizens.

Barnes: They feared, when they heard, etc. They were apprehensive of punishment for having imprisoned them in violation of the laws of the empire. To punish unjustly a Roman citizen was deemed an offence to the majesty of the Roman people, and was severely punished by the laws. Dionysius Hall. (Ant. Rom. ii.) says, that "the punishment appointed for those who abrogated or transgressed the Valerian law was death, and the confiscation of his property." The emperor Claudius deprived the inhabitants of Rhodes of freedom for having crucified some Roman citizens. Dio. Cuss. lib. 60. (See *Kuinel* and *Grotius*.)

BBC: Cicero and Quintilian tell of a Roman citizen who cried out that he was a citizen during a scourging, thereby humiliating his oppressors, who had not properly recognized his high status. By waiting until after the beating (cf. Acts 22:29) to inform the authorities that they were citizens, the missionaries had placed the magistrates themselves in an awkward legal position: now the magistrates, not the missionaries, are forced to negotiate. Reports of their deed could even disqualify them from office and (in theory, at least) deprive Philippi of its status as a Roman colony. This strategy would help secure the future safety of the fledgling Christian community.

Acts 16:39

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

[they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city] The Codex Bezae says that they came with many of their friends pleading for the men to leave before another mob rose up against them, and that the magistrates were ignorant of circumstances and that these were righteous men. They preached to Christians and left (Acts 16:40).

Barnes: And they came and besought them. A most humiliating act for Roman magistrates; but in this case it was unavoidable. The apostles had them completely in their power, and could easily effect their disgrace and ruin. Probably they *besought* them by declaring them innocent; by affirming that they were ignorant that they were Roman citizens, etc.

BBC: The magistrates had no legal authority to expel Roman citizens without trial, but a trial would bring up their own breach of law; thus they are reduced to pleading.

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.

“Brethren”: Other prisoners who were listening? ...results of the women witnessing?

Letter to Philippians, written from Paul’s Roman prison, is full of triumph, encouragement, etc. [Paul left Luke behind here; rejoins in the 20th chapter. We get these inferences from the use of pronouns, but it doesn’t show in the English.]

and departed—but not all; for two of the company remained behind (see on Ac 17:14): *Timotheus*, of whom the Philippians “learned the proof” that he honestly cared for their state, and was truly like-minded with Paul, “serving with him in the Gospel as a son with his father” (Php 2:19–23); and *Luke*, “whose praise is in the Gospel,” though he never praises himself or relates his own labors, and though we only trace his movements in connection with Paul, by the change of a pronoun, or the unconscious variation of his style. In the seventeenth chapter the narrative is again in the *third* person, and the pronoun is not changed to the *second* till we come to Ac 20:5. The modesty with which Luke leaves out all mention of his own labors need hardly be pointed out. We shall trace him again when he rejoins Paul in the same neighborhood. His vocation as a physician may have brought him into connection with these contiguous coasts of Asia and Europe, and he may (as MR. SMITH suggests, “Shipwreck,” &c.) have been in the habit of exercising his professional skill as a surgeon at sea [HOWSON].²⁹

How God Guides

Problem

Understanding doctrine
No sense of direction
Relations with others
Irreconcilable differences
Customs, rituals
Directions to take
Major change

Solution

Unanimous agreement
Persistent obedience
Responsible concern
Cordial separation
Important principle
Sense of Peace
Vision or call

²⁹Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ac 16:40). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.