

Discipleship Questions

Why was there a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, and what was the resolution?

Who was Timothy?

Why did Paul want Timothy to be circumcised?

What were Paul and his travel companions teaching as they went through the various towns?

How did Paul know they needed to preach in Macedonia?

How did Lydia and her household respond to the gospel?

What did Paul do when he met the slave girl possessed by an evil spirit?

What happened to Paul and Silas after this miracle was accomplished?



The church in Jerusalem had successfully corrected the false teaching about circumcision and the Law of Moses that had gone out from them. Paul and Barnabas traveled back to Antioch from Jerusalem. While they were there, they were teaching and preaching.

Paul Begins His Second Journey (Acts 15:36-41)

15:36-41. After some time had passed, Paul and Barnabas discussed a second trip through the towns where they had previously preached (on their first journey), to see how they were doing. You can imagine the concerns about how the new Christians and churches were doing in their faith (often in challenging circumstances; see the book of Galatians). However, there was a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over whether to take John Mark with them. Barnabas (who was an encourager and John Mark's relative, Acts 4:36-37; Colossians 4:10) wanted to take him. Paul did not, since John Mark deserted them in Pamphylia on their first journey (Acts 13:13). They disagreed so deeply that they decided to part company and go on separate journeys (though Paul would later recognize John Mark as being useful, Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11). Their work did not require them to go together, and they were each able to continue in faithful service separately. Barnabas and Mark went westward to Cyprus (where Barnabas was from, Acts 4:36; where he had visited on the first journey, 13:4). Paul chose Silas and, being commended to God's favor by the disciples in Antioch, traveled northward through Syria (the province where Antioch was located) and Cilicia (the province where Tarsus was located, Paul's hometown, Acts 9:11; where Paul had spent time after his conversion, Acts 9:30; 11:25) to strengthen the churches there (Acts 15:23).

Preaching In Galatia And Phrygia (Acts 16:1-6)

16:1-3. Paul and Silas traveled into Galatia, particularly visiting the same towns he had visited on his first journey, where disciples had been made and churches had formed (e.g. Derbe and Lystra, Acts 14:8-20). There (likely in Lystra), Paul found a disciple named Timothy (possibly one Paul helped convert on his first trip, 1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 2 Timothy 1:2), who had a good reputation among the disciples in Lystra and Iconium. Timothy was the son of a Jewish woman who had become a believer and disciple of Christ (Eunice, who taught Timothy the Scriptures, along with her mother, Lois, 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15). Timothy's father, however, was a Greek (Gentile) and likely not a believer. This likely resulted in Timothy not being circumcised. Paul desired to have Timothy accompany them on their journey. However, Paul first took Timothy and circumcised him. This was not a requirement to serve God (Acts 15:1-2; Galatians 2:1-5), but helped Timothy share the gospel among the Jewish people (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

16:4-6. As they all (Paul, Silas, Timothy) traveled throughout the towns, they continued correcting the error that had gone out from Jerusalem concerning the law of Moses and circumcision, delivering the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15:22-29). The churches throughout the region were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers. They preached throughout Galatia and Phrygia (an area in western Galatia and eastern Asia). However, the Holy Spirit somehow forbade them from speaking the word in Asia.

The Macedonian Call (Acts 16:7-10)

16:7-10. They continued traveling and came to Mysia (the northwest part of the Asian province). Then, they tried to travel to Bithynia (a province north of Asia), but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. Note the gospel would eventually be preached in these areas (Acts 19:8-10; 1 Peter 1:1), but God had a specific mission He wanted them to focus on at that time. They then traveled to Troas (a port city in northwest Asia, where the gospel would later be preached, Acts 20:6-12; 2 Corinthians 2:12). Uncertain of where God wanted them to go, Paul had a vision during the night. He saw a Macedonian man (a province across the Aegean Sea from Asia) standing and pleading for Paul to cross the sea and help them. Paul concluded God desired them to preach the gospel in Macedonia (in Europe) and immediately made efforts to travel there. Note Luke's involvement at this point in the journey ("us").

Preaching In Philippi (Acts 16:11-24)

16:11-15. Paul and his traveling companions (Silas, Timothy, and Luke) sailed from Troas to Samothrace (an island between Asia and Macedonia), and then to Neapolis (a port city in Macedonia near Philippi; a complete trip of about 150 miles). They then traveled to Philippi (about ten miles away),

which was a Roman colony and an important city in the district of Macedonia. Staying in the city for several days, they went outside the city gate on the Sabbath day to the river, where there was a place of prayer. Notice the lack of a Jewish synagogue there, but the presence of women who gathered for prayer on the Sabbath. Among these was a God-fearing woman named Lydia (perhaps Jewish, or possibly a Gentile who worshiped God). She was a dealer of either purple dye or purple-dyed clothing (an expensive dye from Thyatira, in Asia). As Paul spoke to the women, Lydia was listening closely. As she paid attention to what was taught, God opened her heart through this preaching to respond in obedience to it (Luke 24:27, 44-49). She and her household were obedient to the gospel by being baptized. She then demonstrated hospitality by having them stay at her house (Galatians 6:6).

16:16-24. On another occasion when Paul and his traveling companions were going to the place of prayer, they encountered a slave girl who was possessed by an evil spirit and was being exploited by her owners as a fortune teller (how much she could accurately predict the future is not disclosed). This girl followed them for several days, crying out that they were proclaiming the way of salvation and were servants of the Most High God (Luke 8:28; James 2:19). Paul was greatly annoyed at this (perhaps not wanting the gospel to be connected with the proclamation of a demon and the things she had been involved with), and commanded the spirit to come out of her in the name of the Lord Jesus. Immediately, it came out! As her owners recognized they could no longer exploit her for their own profit, they dragged Paul and Silas before the authorities. The owners accused Paul and Silas of disturbing the city as Jews who were promoting customs that were contrary for Romans. The crowd also joined in the attack. The chief magistrates had Paul and Silas stripped of their clothing and beaten with rods. After their severe flogging (beating), they were thrown into jail under the jailer's watch. They were then put in the innermost part of the prison and had their feet secured in the stocks (which restrained and also likely spread the legs to their limit as a means of torture).

Conclusion

Paul had begun a second preaching journey, with Silas accompanying him (along with Timothy and Luke at various points). God used them to bring the gospel to Macedonia. After some were receptive, though, they now were experiencing persecution in Philippi.

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