

Acts 16

Recap: Acts 13 World Conquest Under what is called Paul's first missionary journey. First, there was the formal commission which sent Barnabas and Saul on their way (Acts 13:1-3); then there is the account of their efforts on the island of Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12); next is the record of John Mark's defection after the Leadership switches from Barnabas to Paul. The movement of Paul into Asia Minor (Acts 13:13-16); then follows the record of Paul's address in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:17-43) the record of still another sermon in the same city on the Sabbath day one week later (Acts 13:44-52). Then in Acts 13 & 14 Paul and Barnabas, having preached at Iconium with great success, are persecuted, they flee to Lystra and Derbe, Acts 14:1-6. They preach, heal a cripple; then people, supposing them to be gods, are about to offer sacrifices to them, & the people are with difficulty prevented by these apostles, Acts 14:7-18. Certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, coming there, induce idolatrous people to stone Paul; he is dragged out of the city as dead, while disciples stand around him, he rises up suddenly, returns to the city, next day departs to Derbe, Acts 14:19-20. Having preached there, Paul and Barnabas return to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, confirming disciples, ordaining elders in every Church, Acts 14:21-23. They pass through Pisidia and Pamphylia, Acts 14:24. Through Perga and Attalia, Acts 14:25; sail to Antioch in Syria, Acts 14:26. Having called disciples together, inform them of door of faith has been opened to Gentiles, and they abode a long time with the Church, Acts 14:27- 28.

False teachers come saying "that it was needful to circumcise them and to command them to keep the Law of Moses" Acts 15:1-5. Paul & Barnabas meet apostles, Acts 15:2 and inform apostles of Gentiles conversions on 1st Missionary Journey; Pharisees demand circumcision of Gentiles, Acts 15:3-5. Apostles meet privately to consider and plan. Apostle Peter speaks to all, Acts 15:6-11. Barnabas & Paul report success of Gentile work, Acts 15:12. James' opinion, Acts 15:13-21. apostles & elders agree, send Judas & Silas with Paul & Barnabas to Gentiles, Acts 15:22; send letter to Church of Antioch, Syria, & Cilicia, Acts 15:23-29. Paul & company return, read epistle at Antioch, producing great joy; Judas & Silas preach, Acts 15:30-32. Judas returns to Jerusalem, Silas continues with Paul & Barnabas, teaching & preaching, Acts 15:33-35. Paul proposes to Barnabas to visit Churches where they had preached; Barnabas wants to take John Mark, Paul refuses, Acts 15:36-38. They disagree; & Barnabas, taking John Mark, sails to Cyprus, Acts 15:39. & Paul, taking Silas, goes through Syria &

Cilicia, confirming Churches, Acts 15:40, Acts 15:41. Result of their division was two Missionary works.

Acts 15: 36-40 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, [and see] how they do. 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; 40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Acts 16

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

Paul's being stoned at Lystra on the first tour was not an indication of failure, because out of that tragic experience this glorious fruit of the gospel appeared. On his second return to Lystra, Paul was rewarded by being joined by a young convert who was destined to be a faithful companion of the great apostle, and whose name "Timothy" would adorn two of the 27 New Testament books.

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

These verses reveal the good reputation of Timothy, not only in his home community of Lystra, but also in the more important city of Iconium as well.

Timothy was a perfect mission worker except his father was a Greek.

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.

Paul had recently fought furiously for freedom from the demands of circumcision. He debated the Jews at Antioch, rebuked and straightened out Peter, then he planned the strategy at the Jerusalem council, and refused to allow Titus to be circumcised.

What is unimportant, unnecessary and even harmful as a basis of salvation can be most important qualification for a public leader. Paul had won the “War” on that subject at the Jerusalem council with a letter decree. He did not want to keep fighting that “battle” over and over again everywhere he went preaching.

If one is circumcised in order to be saved, then Christ is voided as a savior. Cf: Galatians 6:2. But if one is circumcised in order to identify with those Jews who believe in circumcision in order to convert then circumcision becomes a useful tool.

I Corinthians 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all [*men*], that I might by all means save some.

Paul will adopt many Jewish customs as a means of reconciliation where as a means of furthering the Gospel. He never hesitates to use his Roman citizenship, Greek culture, or Jewish scruples as long as it is not looked on as a basis of Salvation.

“... to go forth with him ... Paul, seeing in this promising young man the qualities which would commend him to the work as a fellow missionary,

Circumcised him ... This was not for the purpose of enabling Timothy to become a Christian, for he already was a Christian, having obeyed the gospel on the first Missionary Journey. Neither was it for the purpose of admitting Timothy into any higher fellowship, or any more abundant grace. The reason for it being simply the one bluntly stated: "because of the Jews that were there."

For they all knew his father was a Greek ... This is to explain the anticipated objections from Jews. Knowing Timothy's father was a Greek, they would have assumed that Timothy had never been circumcised. Furthermore, they would have raised trouble for Paul over that issue wherever possible. Therefore, purely as a matter of expediency, Paul met it by the circumcision of Timothy.

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.

Delivering these decrees merely confirms Paul's analysis of the Gospel in Galatians. The Gospel has expanded geographically. It has expanded its' beliefs and set free its' children to practice and worship God in simplicity. It has arrived as a breath of freedom planned by God from “before the foundation of the world”.

Man's relation to God is based on God's loving acceptance of man and in Christ. The approach to God is openly available. There is no favorite nation, exclusive culture, cultic preference, or religious ritual that influences God to accept man. God created man, "in Christ" God accepts man. A term Paul uses no less than 169 times in his writing.

Galatians 3:26-29 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye [*be*] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

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

This is Luke's fourth summary found in Acts.

The first missionary journey has brought forth the idea that the Gospel is for all man on God's terms of grace and forgiveness "in Christ".

The first missionary journey was the fact of salvation "in Christ" demonstrated.

The Jerusalem Counsel was the fact of salvation "in Christ" debated and defined.

Then the delivery of the decision to the Gentile churches was the fact of salvation "in Christ" confirmed.

"And so were the churches established in the faith ... The Gospel was totally clarified in their minds. The faith says that men are acceptable to God as they are "in Christ" ... God has opened the way for all ... with new clarity and understanding growth in the Church inevitably follows. So the Gospel is on its way in ever widening circles towards Rome the capital of the world.

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,

Galatia was a large Roman province with a number of subordinate regions. Perga was one such region.

This implies that Paul's plan called for the missionaries to turn west to invade the populous centers of Asia such as Ephesus.

From chapter thirteen till now, God's providence has led the missionaries but here God asserts more direct involvement in the strategy of World Conquest in ways that left no doubt, not to turn west. Paul would later be directed to Asia.

Acts 16:7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

The spirit is guiding the work ... they are blocked from Asia, barred from Bithynia.

Acts 16:8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

They arrive at Mysia and the famous storied city of Troy on the sea. The presence of God even in a negatively restraining way could only instill in these men a vision of expectancy, a sense of purpose and a feeling of something great was about to happen. God has definite job for them to do. Just to know that is enough to excite the mind and stir the imagination.

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.

Outstanding is the idea of the immediate guidance of God. Even with guidance man needs to follow the guidance. Often God puts a man in a situation with enough facts so that he can make logical conclusions as to what the will of God is. God led the missionaries clear across the continent until they came to the dead end at Troy ... there is no where left to go but where the "vision" told them.

Acts 16:10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

"... immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia... Here surfaces the first of the famous "we" passages of Acts, indicating that at Troas Luke was personally present at this time of the "vision" and the decision ... there he became a member of Paul's company. Boles understood this passage as teaching that Luke was already a preacher of the gospel to the Gentiles, basing it on the following:

"... gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them ..."
By the use of "us," Luke showed that "He included himself with Paul, Silas and Timothy as preachers of the gospel.

Acts 16:11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, [sam-uh-threys] and the next [day] to Neapolis;

No mention is made of Paul's preaching in Troas at this time ... yet, a bit later, there is revealed to have been a church there (Acts 20:5). Was that church the result of Luke's preaching?

Straight course to Samothrace [sam-uh-threys]... This journey in a single day was possible because of a favoring wind ... because, "on a later occasion (Acts 20:6), a voyage from Philippi to Troas took five days."

Neapolis (ne-ap'-o-lis) ... means "Newtown" and Neapolis (ne-ap'-o-lis) afforded a more favorable route to Philippi.

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.

Philippi ... the chief city of that part of Macedonia... a (Roman) colony ... Luke meant the most important town in the district ... or this was the first city they came to in their journey inland.

From the standpoint of Christianity, this is not merely the first of the district, but the first of Europe, for it was here that the gospel message was planted by means of the conversions in this chapter. The congregation which developed there was very dear to Paul, and to them he addressed the book of Philipians.

Historically, it was founded by Philip of Macedon and controlled the gold mines of Pangaeus, thus providing the financial muscle to propel the armies of Alexander the Great to militarily conquer the world.

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

There was no synagogue in Philippi, but whatever Jews might have been in the area could have been expected to observe prayers on the sabbath, and the preachers supposed such a place of prayer to be a certain site on the river.

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.

Lydia, a seller of purple ... An expensive purple dye, made of the murex shell, was one of the most valuable commodities of antiquity and Lydia's engaging in trade of such a product surely indicates some considerable wealth. This was the dye that gave rise to the words "royal purple," suggested by the fact that royalty and the extremely rich were the principal purchasers of it

"Whose heart the Lord opened ... The obvious means by which God opened the heart of Lydia was that of preaching the gospel to her ...

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.

And why was she baptized? Because the commandment thus to obey the Lord was included in the preaching of these who spoke unto her the word of salvation.

"... baptized and her household ..." Acts 16:13 "spake unto the women which resorted [*thither*]. " Thus making it mandatory to find Lydia's household in that group of women ... no children are mentioned.

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.

Spirit of divination ... The Greek here has "A Python spirit," thus Luke identified this unfortunate girl as one coming from the pagan temple at Delphi, where the Pythian Apollo was worshiped, the python being sacred to him, and his devotees being said to have the python spirit.

As the patron of Delphi (*Pythian Apollo*), Apollo was an oracular god—the prophetic deity of the Delphic Oracle. Medicine and healing are associated with Apollo, whether through the god himself or mediated ...

The name *Pythia* is derived from Pytho, which in myth was the original name of Delphi. The Greeks derived this place name from the verb "to rot", which refers to the sickly sweet smell of the decomposition of the body of the monstrous Python after she was slain by Apollo. Pythia was the House of Snakes.

Luke's identification of this girl with that pagan establishment contains no suggestion whatever of any validity in their outlandish claims. Rather, Paul's

addressing the "spirit" in her clearly indicates exactly the same kind of demon possession so often healed by our Lord.

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

Servants of the most high God ... The Gerasene demoniacs used this same expression regarding Jesus, this speech of the girl thus proving the fact of her being possessed by a demon.

Mark 5:7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, [*thou*] Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

Paul being sore troubled ... Paul's problem was simple, but difficult as well. The slave-masters who were exploiting this alleged soothsayer were making a lot of money out of her. They knew she was a fraud, else they would have believed it when she identified Luke and Paul and company as servants of the Most High God showing the right way of salvation. Paul therefore knew that if he cast the demon out of her, there would be a sharp conflict with the evil men who owned her. He delayed acting as long as he properly could, hoping perhaps that she would desist; but when she continued, Paul cast the demon out. He, even as the Lord, could not afford an endorsement of one so clearly evil; and furthermore, any sign or miracle that Paul might have performed would have been seized upon by the masters of the girl in an effort to exploit such to their own benefit

Acts 16:18-19 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. 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,

McGarvey, and others, have pointed out a somewhat humorous pun in Luke's Greek at this place. He said, "That when the evil spirit WENT OUT, the masters saw that the hope of their gain WENT OUT

The retaliation Paul had evidently feared took place at once.

Acts 16:20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

These men, being Jews ... This was the principal basis of the attack on Paul and Silas, Luke and Timothy apparently being allowed to pass unmolested, because being Greeks (Timothy was half Greek), they would not have had the typical Jewish appearance of Paul and Silas. This was brought on by the evil use of the demon-possessed girl. There was no formal trial of any kind and no opportunity for the accused brethren to defend themselves. It was a case of "mob justice" in which the population willingly participated. The magistrates were shamefully delinquent in their duty in the scene which emerges here.

Acts 16:21-22 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. 22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat [*them*].

Under the system of Roman administration throughout the ancient empire, the police attendants of public officials carried bundles of rods, or cane, bound in a circle around an axe, symbolizing the power of the authorities to chastise and to execute, a representation of this ancient device being visible on the reverse side of the U.S. Mercury dime.

Acts 16:23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast [*them*] into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: 24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

"inner prison ... stocks ..." The jailer who seems also to have had some knowledge of his prisoners nevertheless resisted any humane impulse that might have come to him. Instead of "keeping them safely" as charged, he added the element of torture to their imprisonment by putting them in stocks. This prevented their being able either to sit up or to lie down, and must have been a most painful and unnecessary humiliation imposed upon them by the pagan jailer. God would speak to him, however, before the night was over.

Acts 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

This is one of the most thrilling things ever recorded of the apostolic missionaries and has inspired many a sermon and printed article on "Songs at Midnight." The bleeding, suffering apostles uttering their prayers and singing the praises of God under circumstances such as they were in was something which must indeed have amazed and enthralled the other prisoners. It was midnight, not merely in

that jail, but throughout the great pagan empire also, a midnight of morals, humanity, and justice, as well as that of night.

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.

A great earthquake ... Often, it is impossible to draw a line between the natural and the supernatural; but the conduct of the mistreated apostles in that jail was such that, when the earthquake came (from whatever cause), every listener who had heard them praying and singing would at once have concluded that God had thus answered their petitions ... we do not hesitate to draw the same conclusion. The circumstance of every door being opened and all stocks being released encourages the deduction that God here acted on behalf of his servants.

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.

Pagan that he was, the jailer lived by a harsh code and was willing to die by it. In pagan lands suicide was an accepted manner of solving a problem, as in the case before us.

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

The fact of none of the prisoners having fled is itself remarkable, showing that they responded to Paul's evident insistence that none should seek to escape, which would appear from Paul's ability in this matter to speak for all of them.

Acts 16:29-30 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

What must I do to be saved? ... This question occurs at three places in Acts, identically in each instance as to meaning, and varying only slightly in form: (1) "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37), (2) "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30), and (3) "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10). The answers as given in each instance are: (1) "Repent and be baptized every one of you, ..."

Acts 16:31-32 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. **32** And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

Spake the word of the Lord ... One thing is certain: "the word of the Lord" which they addressed to him included the commandment that he should be baptized into Christ.

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.

The jailer did not merely "believe" in the Lord; he repented of his sins, as indicated by the washing of stripes he himself might have inflicted. That he was also baptized is clearly stated, not as something which he eventually did, but as being done "straightway," and "the same hour of the night". No doodling around !

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.

"... believing in God... is used as a synecdoche here for the whole bundle of things by which he had become a follower of Christ; and this use of such a figure of speech to stand for the various things he had already done is exactly the same as the use of it earlier for the various things he was required to do. Thus, here is a perfect example of how Paul and the other New Testament writers used "faith" or "believe" as a short form for a number of related actions.

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

There could have been some second thoughts on their part about the illegal proceedings of the day before; and by such a release of the prisoners they probably hoped to forestall any repercussions.

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.

Go in peace ... This seems to imply that one of the conditions of their release was that the preachers should leave town; but if that was their intention, the magistrates were in for a shock.

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.

Silas also was a Roman citizen, that possibly being one of the reasons Paul had for choosing him for the journey.

“let them come themselves and fetch us out ...” The crime committed by the magistrates in beating and imprisoning Roman citizens without due process of law was a serious one.

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

They feared ... This was natural, because there were instances of very high Roman officials losing their positions and suffering drastic penalties for violating the traditional laws regarding citizens.

They besought them ... In context, this was humiliating to the magistrates; and their consenting to do it is a measure of their concern over violations they had committed. The facts here, with the words "when they heard they were Romans," strongly suggest that Paul and Silas' protests at the time of punishment were not relayed to the magistrates.

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

“... desired [*them*] to depart out of the city.” The words show that the apostles were not ordered, but requested, to leave the city, a request Paul and company honored, after due deliberation, and without doing so hastily.

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.

“... they comforted them ...” means that the apostles, especially Paul and Silas, comforted the brethren! This is astounding! Those men who had been so shamefully treated, abused, beaten, illegally cast into prison, suffering the torture of stocks in the inner dungeon comforted the brethren! How noble, unselfish and beautiful is that scene in which men whose backs were still raw and bloody from the scourge are cast in the role of comforters for young Christians whose distress

at such events, while real enough, was nevertheless mental rather than physical. This is one of the grandest statements in Scripture.

Sources: KJV, theWord.com, Coffman's, B.W. Johnson, McGarvey and Clarke Commentaries, Google images