

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 15:35-16:10 | Session 40 | Macedonian Call

With the state of the new Gentile believers settled, Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch for a period of time, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord (15:35).

Verse 36—

The Scofield Bible dates this passage around A.D. 53. **And some days after**, the author, Luke, does not tell us how long or how many days, the word **some** just means, “a while”, but it was most likely a year or more. **Let us go again and visit our brethren**. At this point there does not appear to be any solely *Gentile churches*. Most likely what we have is both Jew and Gentile serving the Lord together under a mixture of Kingdom and grace messages. We definitely see this mix of Jew and Gentile, for example, when we read 1st and 2nd Corinthians and the book of Ephesians. In spite of that, Paul was concerned about them; knowing of course, the opposition that they were faced with by the Judaizers (or, the Law lovers). Likewise, these assemblies had not heard the resolution from the Jerusalem council; that is, Gentile believers do not have to follow the Law of Moses through circumcision, etc. **In every city...and see how they do**. Did Paul go to **every city**? We will see as we move through the next several chapters that it doesn't appear that he did. But, as we will explain more in verse 39, perhaps Barnabas hits some of the cities Paul misses. But going back to every city was the goal. **To see how they do**, follow-up with a new Christian is always key. Sound doctrine must be continually taught otherwise they will give up, or turn to some other gospel (as did the those in Galatia, Galatians 1:6). In fact, today, in the cities where Paul established the gospel, the message is either perverted or nonexistent.

Verses 37-41—

Do Christians always get along? Sometimes good men can disagree and that is what happens here. *Barnabas determined to take John Mark with them. Paul didn't think that was a good idea.*

On the first missionary journey, John Mark left the party shortly after leaving Paphos and arriving in Perga. We do not know why John Mark left, but whatever the reason, Paul didn't like it and did not want to chance him deserting again. It takes time for a quitter to regain someone's trust. John Mark **went not with them to the work**, and as far as Paul was concerned, he would not go this time.

And the contention was so sharp between them, that the departed asunder. So many people believe contention is always wrong in the church: why can't we all just get along? The fact is, Christians will not always agree. There is a lot of debate as to who was right and who was wrong in this division between Paul and Barnabas. My thought is that they did not depart from each other mad, but merely with a difference of opinion, and that perhaps, they decided to divide and conquer. **Barnabas took Mark, and sailed to Cyprus**. There, Barnabas and Mark could check up on the brethren in that region and save Paul time. And while Luke does not cover their journey in the book of Acts, their departure to Cyprus would speed up the ultimate mission to check up on the brethren.

And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. In essence Paul and Silas were committed by the brethren to take the **grace** message **through Syria Cilicia, confirming** (or, encouraging/strengthening) **the churches**. As noted above, they were visiting the *ekklesias*, or the assemblies. Paul and Silas took the land route through northwest Syria and into Cilicia where Paul's hometown was located, Tarsus.

Chapter 16:1,2--

We don't receive any information on the journey until they reach the cities of **Derbe and Lystra**. It was in Lystra where Paul healed a crippled man and was thought to be a god by the people of the city. Later he was stoned and left for dead (See 14:19). This time there does not appear to be any danger. Derbe is the first primary city he would have come to. In order to get there, he would have had to pass through a mountain range/gorge known as the Cilician Gates. It was rugged territory. Paul, being from Tarsus, about 30 miles south, he would have known of this passage.

A certain disciple was there, named Timotheus. We don't know how **Timotheus**, or Timothy became a disciple, but it was probably during Paul's first visit to that city. Timothy was a product of an intermarriage, his mother being a Jew, and his father a Greek. Timothy's mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois (2 Timothy 1:5), did not adopt the Greek religion, but kept their strong Jewish faith, and taught it Timothy, in that he knew the Scriptures from childhood (2 Timothy 3:15). Timothy was not circumcised (vs. 3), it may suggest there was some tension in the family regarding religion. Nonetheless, Timothy was **well reported of by the brethren**. He was known in Lystra, and Iconium and had a good reputation.

Verse 3—

Paul wanted to take Timothy along with him, but first he **took and circumcised him**. In chapter 15 it was established that a Gentile believer did not have to be circumcised in order to be saved. So why is does Paul have Timothy circumcised? Was Timothy a Jew, or a Gentile? Being from a mixed marriage it was probably confusing. There is a debate as to one's Jewishness coming from the mother, or the father. However, if Timothy was going to be around Jews, and Jewish synagogues on the journey with Paul it was **because of the Jews which were in those quarters** that he was circumcised, as it was well know **his father was a Greek**. His uncircumcision would be a hindrance in sharing the gospel to a Jewish audience; *that he might gain the Jews* (1 Corinthians 9:20).

Verses 4,5—

Delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained (selected) **of the apostles** (15:29). As we have seen, there was a Jewish base in the assemblies, but also a Gentile mix. In order for the two to be compatible, the tension had to be relieved by the decree of the apostles, and this allowed time for growth as the assembly **increased in number daily**.

Verses 6-10—

Forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. Just how they were forbidden, we don't know. At this point, the geography of where exactly they journeyed is difficult to know. Whatever, or wherever they were, they wanted to go north to **Bithynia**, but again **the Spirit suffered them not**. Guided by the Holy Spirit, they **came down to Troas**, where **a vision appeared to Paul in the night**. It may have been through visions that the Holy Spirit communicated with them where they were to go, as we see happening here. **Come over to Macedonia, and help us**. And **immediately they endeavoured to go**.

We must be careful in not making a doctrine from an historic event. For example, “Because Paul received a call in a vision, I too should wait for a call in my life before venturing out.” I think this is a dangerous way to live, and can ultimately leave a person defeated. Nevertheless, we may not want to go to the other extreme (no supernatural work of God today) either. Is there a balance?