

Acts 15:36-16:40 ~ Teacher's Lesson
Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey, Part 1

Teacher's Note: Draw simple map on board of the Mediterranean world before class begins. Show locations of Syria, Cilicia, Lycia, Asia, the Aegean Sea, Achaia, Galatia, Phrygia, Bithynia, Mysia, Samothrace, Macedonia and Philippi.

Introduction: For nearly 2000 years the gospel was in Europe. Not until the 1800s did the gospel make it to China. Ever wonder what it was not the other way around, the China was the center for Christian and Europe was in darkness? Today you will find out how that happened!

Review: At the end of their 1st missionary journey to Cyprus and Galatia (Acts 13-14), Paul and Barnabas sailed back to their home base, Antioch, where they remained a long time, teaching, 14:24-28, 15:35. Today we'll start in on the 2nd missionary journey.

Missions Geography:

1st Missionary Journey—Cyprus and south-central Turkey (Galatia)

2nd Missionary Journey—Northern Greece (Macedonia), establishing churches in Philippi, Thessalonica and Corinth

******What sharp disagreement did Paul and Barnabas have (15:36-41)?** They had personnel problems

1. Why didn't Paul want Mark on the team (15:36)? During the first missionary journey, Mark left the team and went home. No reason was given by Luke for Mark's departure. Perhaps Paul saw him as undependable.

2. What was there about Barnabas that might have inclined him to overlook Mark's departure (15:37)? *See Acts 4:36, 9:26-27, 11:23-26.* Barnabas evidently has the spiritual gift of encouragement and exhortation. It was Barnabas who first trusted Paul after his conversion and later drafted him for service. No doubt Barnabas wanted to give Mark another chance to prove himself.¹ Barnabas' intuition about Mark was correct, for Mark did indeed later go on to have a significant ministry himself. Paul himself later said of Mark:

ESV 2 Timothy 4:11 Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.

How did they resolve the dispute (15:39-40)? They reached a happy solution, agreed to disagree, and turned a single mission team into two teams!² Barnabas left with Mark for Cyprus, and Paul left with Silas³ for Syria and Cilicia.⁴ It was a win-win situation.

¹ According to Colossian 4:10, Barnabas and Mark were cousins.

² Marshall, 274.

3. What was the stated purpose of this trip (15:36, 41)? The reason stated here was to revisit the churches planted on the first mission trip to see how they were (15:36) and to strengthen them (15:41). However, it is obvious from later developments that evangelism was also a major goal.

Geography: From Antioch, Paul and Silas traveled north and then west. This took them through coastal regions of **1) Syria** (due east of Cyprus) and then **2) Cilicia** (due north of Cyprus). From Cilicia, they went north, inland, into Galatia, revisiting the cities of Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium (16:1-2).⁵ It is all in Modern Turkey.

******How did a disciple named Timothy prove his commitment to effective evangelism (16:1-5)?** In order to be a more effective witness to the Jews, Timothy underwent the painful procedure of circumcision. What a guy! It is no wonder Paul was impressed with Timothy and wanted him on the mission team. This is the guy to whom the letters of 1 & 2 Timothy were written.

4. What indication does Genesis 34 give us of how painful adult circumcision is? The book of Genesis tells about some men who were circumcised as adults. Three days later they were attacked, but were in such great pain they could not effectively fight back, and all were slain (Ge 34).

Timothy was Jewish; why was he not already circumcised (16:3)? See 16:1b. The fact that Timothy's father was Greek doubtless accounted for him not being circumcised. That his mom married a Greek suggests she had not been devout. However, he was still considered to be Jewish (the child of a Gentile father and Jewish mother was still considered to be Jewish).⁶

5. Why did Timothy's circumcision (16:3) not go against the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)? See 15:21, 1 Corinthians 9:20. Paul did not have Timothy circumcised so that he could be saved (15:1) or because he was under the Law of Moses (15:5). The reason he had him circumcised was to remove a potential offense and hindrance to evangelism. Since Timothy was Jewish, it was an offense to unbelieving Jews that he was not circumcised.

ESV 1 Corinthians 9:20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews.

³ Silas was one of the men chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch with the letter from the Jerusalem Council, 15:32.

⁴ Cyprus is an island in the extreme NE of the Mediterranean Sea. Syria was a region due east of Cyprus. It is now divided between Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. The part of Syria that Antioch was in is now Turkey. Cilicia was a region due north of Cyprus and today is totally within Turkey (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1155). Paul's hometown, Tarsus, was in Cilicia.

⁵ Derbe and Lystra are listed in reverse order because Paul approached them from the east (Marshall, 275).

⁶ *ESV Study Bible*, 2117.

According to 16:4-5, what message did Paul, Silas, and Timothy deliver to the churches?

They delivered the decision of the Jerusalem Council: Gentiles need not be circumcised to be saved and are not obligated to keep the Law of Moses.

6. Last lesson we discussed the “use” of the Jerusalem Council (its application). What application word is found in 16:4? The mission team delivered the decision of the Council not merely for their information, but for their “observance”. The lesson for us today is that we too are to observe the council’s decision. Christians are not under the Law of Moses!

What impact did observing the decision of the council have on the churches (16:5)? They were **1)** strengthened in the faith, and **2)** increased in number.

Church Grown Insight: Perhaps one key to church growth is obeying the decision of the Jerusalem Council. Flirting with the Law of Moses weakens the church and is a drag on growth.

******How did God direct Paul’s movements (16:6-10)?** After first forbidding him from going Asia and Bithynia, God gave Paul a vision in which a Macedonian man called to him for help. (Macedonia today is northern Greece, straight across the Aegean Sea from Turkey).

Divine Direction: However it was communicated, Holy Spirit sovereignly directed the team further westward, into Europe. It was an irresistible sweep. Imagine if the Spirit has not stopped them from following their original course: the center for Christianity might have become China instead of Europe!

7. According to 16:6, why did they go through Phrygia and Galatia? They evidently went to Phrygia and Galatia because they were forbidden by the Spirit from going to Asia. They couldn’t keep going west, so they went north.

Geography: All these regions (Phrygia, Galatia, Asia) are in modern Turkey. Iran is on Turkey’s eastern border. The Black Sea is Turkey’s northern border. The Mediterranean Sea and Syria constitute Turkey’s southern border. The Aegean Sea (and beyond that, Greece) is its western border.

1. The team started out from Antioch in south central Turkey (just above modern Syria).
2. They traveled west along the coast to Cilicia.
3. They turned northward into Phrygia and Galatia.
4. They were forbidden from going into Asia. Asia was next region west of Galatia, and ran all the way to the Aegean Sea.

According to 16:7-8, how did they end up in the city of Troas? Above both Asia and Phrygia were the regions of Mysia and Bithynia. It was the next logical place for the team to do evangelism. However, God forbid them from going there, so they squeezed between Asia and Bithynia and dropped down into the coast town of Troas (opposite Greece), where they evidently just planned to spend the night.⁷

8. How do you suppose Holy Spirit forbade them from going to these regions (16:6-7)? Luke did not record how the Holy Spirit communicated to them.

9. What interesting pronoun shift is there between 16:6 and 16:10? It went from “they” to “we.” Evidently, Luke, Silas and Timothy were not the only ones on this trip. Somewhere along the way (perhaps at Troas), Luke had joined it too!

*****Who was the first person living in Europe to respond to the gospel (16:11-15)?** It was a businesswoman named Lydia.⁸

Geography (16:11-12): The team set sail from the port of Troas in western Turkey and sailed northwest to the island of Samothrace. From there they sailed to the port city of Neapolis (in modern Greece). Philippi, where Lydia heard the gospel, was a city 10 miles inland from Neapolis.⁹ Philippi was the site where Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius (who had murdered Julius Caesar).¹⁰

10. On the Jewish Sabbath day, why did the team go to the riverside instead of the synagogue (16:13)? Their *modus operandi* was to seek out the most ready audience. There evidently was no synagogue in Philippi. However, the team must have done some investigating and heard a rumor that there was a Jewish prayer meeting every Sabbath down by the river.

Keep Out: That this prayer meeting was held outside the city suggests that Judaism was outlawed in Philippi.

Why were only women at this prayer meeting (16:13)? Women in general seem to be more open to spiritual things than are men.

11. A group of women gathered for prayer. One in particular paid attention. According to 16:14, why was Lydia in the mood to listen to what they had to say? It was because the Lord opened her heart to pay attention.

Insight: We are not alone when we evangelize. The Lord is working behind the scenes to prepare people to receive the gospel.

⁷ Troas lies deserted today (*New Bible Dictionary*, 1224).

⁸ Since she was originally from Thyatira (16:14, in Turkey), Lydia was not technically a European.

⁹ *New Bible Dictionary*, 820, 1063.

¹⁰ Marshall, 282.

ESV **2 Corinthians 4:4** . . . the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ . . .

What can we learn about Lydia from 16:14? She was from the city of Thyatira in the region of Lydia (she evidently was named after her region). Thyatira was famous for its purple dyes. As a seller of purple goods (purple was expensive), she would have been a woman of wealth. She was also a “worshiper of God”, that is, a devout Gentile interested in Jehovah God.

Based on 16:15, who else believed besides Lydia? Her household believed as well. This would have consisted of her servants and any family members (perhaps she was widowed and had children or perhaps other relatives were living with her).

Insight: Just as Lydia’s household came to faith, so had the household of Cornelius. It was common in the New Testament for entire households to come to faith. A primary mission field should be our family members.

******How did Paul solve an annoying problem (16:16-18)?** He cast the demon out of the slave girl. It is interesting that there is no indication she became a believer after this. She probably had “issues” other than demon possession.

Was the slave girl’s message accurate (16:17)? Theologically, it was impeccable. The demons evidently have orthodox beliefs.

12. Why did Paul find the slave girl so annoying (16:18a)? The problem was not the message itself, but the source! It was bad advertising, unwanted publicity. It would like having Jack the Ripper endorse your line of cutlery.

What can we observe about exorcisms from 16:18? Paul did not speak to the spirit on his own authority, but rather in the authority of Jesus.

Joke: *What happens if you don’t pay your exorcist on time?* You get repossessed!

******How did Paul and Silas end up in jail (16:19-24)?** When the slave girl’s owners saw their revenue stream interrupted, they stirred up a mob, accused them of being trouble makers. They persuaded the corrupt civil authorities to have them stripped, beaten and imprisoned (without due process). Though they were motivated by lost profits, other pretexts were found for accusing the apostles.

Economics is the cause of most wars; just follow the money! In this case, opposition to the gospel was rooted in money.

ESV **Matthew 6:24** You cannot serve God and money.

ESV **1 Timothy 6:10** . . . the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils.

13. In 16:20, what did the owners accuse them of besides disturbing the peace? They accused them of being Jews. The Romans just barely tolerated the Jews, and it did not take much for their prejudice to come to the surface. Notice that the lost money was not mentioned.

Why were they not only placed in stocks but also put in the inner prison (16:23-24)? The jailer was ordered to keep them “safely” (i.e., not to let them escape). Luke relayed this information to heighten the significance of the miracle that was about to take place.

MIA: Where were Timothy and Luke all this time (16:19-24)? How did they avoid prison? Perhaps they were elsewhere evangelizing. Perhaps Paul and Silas purposely had them to keep a low profile so that, keeping their freedom, they could work on the outside to get them freed.

******What three miracles happened that night in the prison (16:25-34)?** First, an earthquake caused the prison doors to open and the prisoners’ bonds to come unfastened (**Joke:** The original jail house rock!). Next, none of the criminals tried to escape. Finally, the jailer put his faith in Jesus.

Based on 16:25, what attitude did Paul and Silas have while in prison? They were praying and singing hymns to God. It is quite fitting that when Paul later wrote a letter to the church in Philippi, he said:

ESV **Philippians 4:4** Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

14. What impact did their singing have on the other prisoners (16:25, 27-28)? It was such that when the chance came to escape, they remained in the jail.

15. Why was the jailer going to kill himself just because the prisoners had escaped (16:27)? This is unknown. The very least that could be said is that he took his job very seriously! Even if there were severe consequences to a jailer for allowing prisoners to escape, in this case any escape was totally beyond anyone’s control. It was due to a natural disaster. Surely no court would have found him liable.¹¹

16. Why did the jailer think Paul and Silas had something to do with the earthquake (16:27-29)? They had kept him from killing himself! Also, he realized something supernatural had happened, and that Paul and Silas were in some way connected with it. That he asked them about being saved shows that he knew they were on a spiritual mission. Their reputation preceded them!

17. According to Paul and Silas, what must a person do to be saved (16:31)? The essence of the answer is that all a person needs to do is believe in the Lord Jesus.

¹¹ Marshall, 288.

a) *Being saved involves faith.*

ESV **Ephesians 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith.

b) *Being saved involves faith the “Lord” Jesus. “Jesus is Saviour to those to whom he is Lord”.*¹²

Teaching Them to Observe: After presenting the Gospel to the jailed, they went on to speak the word of the Lord to him, thoroughly explaining the gospel and teaching of Jesus. This is necessary to conserve the effect of evangelism and to make disciples.

Sovereignty: Not even arrest and imprisonment could impede the progress of the gospel. Instead, it actually helped it. The earthquake demonstrated the power of God, which led to the conversion of the jailer and his household.

Household: Notice again the household aspect of salvation. When the head of a household believes (Cornelius, Lydia, the jailer), the other members of the household often come to faith, too (16:31, 32, 33).

When did the jailer finally wash their wounds (16:32-33)? It was not until after he jailed had been taught the word of the Lord! The work of the ministry came before their own personal comfort.¹³

How soon after he believed was the jailer baptized (16:33)? He was baptized that very night. The New Testament pattern is to baptize a person shortly after he believes. In this, the baptism followed instruction.

Based on 16:31-33, is baptism necessary in order to be saved? Baptism is not necessary for salvation, no more than circumcision is. Baptism is merely the outward sign of an inner action (salvation).

ESV **1 Corinthians 1:14-17.** . . Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel . . .

******How did Paul strike fear into the hearts of the magistrates (16:36-40)?** See 22:22-29. It was unlawful to whip a Roman citizen who had not been condemned. There were evidently penalties for any official who did so. When the officials realized what they had done, they were afraid.

Joke: A Christian Chinese woman once wrote that she was seeking a husband who “scares God.” (She meant “fears God”!).

¹² Marshall, 289.

¹³ Ibidl, 290.

18. What was Paul's purpose in scaring these magistrates (16:35-40)? See back to 16:13, 20-21. Paul's accusers said, "These men are Jews" (16:20). Perhaps the Jewish prayer meeting was held outside the city walls because Judaism was banned from the city (16:13). Paul now had leverage over these men. There would have been in big legal trouble if Paul pressed charges. If they troubled the new church, Paul could trouble them.

Why didn't Paul inform them that he was a Roman citizen before they whipped him (16:37)? It all happened so fast and with such uproar that there had been no opportunity to object.

Out of Dodge: The magistrates still asked (albeit nicely) Paul and Silas to leave town. They were responsible for keeping the peace, and no doubt fear more rioting if the team stayed.

What can we learn about the church of Philippi from 16:40? It evidently met at the home of Lydia.

House Church Sizes: The people mentioned in the New Testament who hosted a church were demonstrably wealthy people (such as Lydia). Roman villas had larger rooms in them than most Western houses do today.

So What?

19. What can we learn about evangelism from Timothy's circumcision? We must be careful not to cause unnecessary offense, and we must get out of our comfort zones and evangelize.

What can we learn about not always being a witness from Paul's avoidance of Asia? We must listen to the Spirit's still small voice. God may not want us to share the Gospel with everyone we meet.

20. What can we learn about evangelism from what happened so far on this second mission trip? God prepares the elect (Lydia); there will be opposition (riots, prison); God works despite the setbacks (prison, earthquake).

21. What can we learn about being as wise as serpents and harmless as doves from Paul's use of his citizenship? We should be shrewd and cunning when dealing with the world (think; calculate).

22. Why doesn't God protect missionaries from hardship (beating, imprisonment)? God moves in mysterious ways. His ways are not our ways.

Paul and Silas prayed and sang God's praises after being whipped and imprisoned. How can we know that kind of joy?

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
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