

Acts 15:36-16:15 “The Start of Paul’s Second Missionary Journey” 9/1/2024

Intro & Review:

Luke is demonstrating how the Jewish messiah and his people welcome the gentiles without becoming Jews first. They are not circumcised, nor do they keep the dietary laws or ceremonies.

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Luke is defending the legitimacy of that claim.

4 parts of Acts, roughly 7 chapters each:

1. -3 **Sermons**, centered in Jerusalem (chs 1-7)

2. -3 Conversions, Samaritans (half breed Jews), Ethiopian Eunuch (gentile proselyte to Judaism), Cornelius (Gentile) -In each account, God gives signs and wonders to confirm His acceptance of this movement. (chs 8-12)

3. -3 **Journeys** to the world, we saw the first one, and are now on the second one. (chs 13-20)

4. -3 Trials of Paul, he is vindicated and displays God’s sanction on Paul as the apostle to the gentiles (chs 21-28)

Last week we looked at the **Jerusalem council in Acts 15**. It is the segue from the first missionary journey to the second.

46-47 First Journey. Four or five years have passed. The council was in AD50. **Paul’s first letter, the letter to the Galatians is probably written between the time of the conclusion of the first missionary journey and the Jerusalem council.** He is explaining the gospel to them and making the case that they do not need to become Jewish in order to be saved.

Paul now has complete vindication of his position from the Apostles and elders at the church in Jerusalem and wants to go back and visit these churches.

I. Conflict (15:36-41)

Barnabas was with him on the first journey, so he is invited to go but there is a problem. Barnabas wants to take John Mark and Paul is vehemently opposed to bringing him along. Why? Because JM abandoned them on the first missionary journey. Barnabas is JM’s uncle and wants to give the kid another chance, but Paul is unwavering on his opinion.

We do not know why JM left but it could be that he had a problem with what Paul was preaching. However, we do not know the cause. Nevertheless, Paul prevails and proceeds without Barnabas or JM, taking Silas instead. Barnabas and JM sail to Cypress, where they are from. They went to the house. Luke does not mention them again. However, you'll remember that JM is later restored and becomes the secretary for Peter and records the gospel in our New Testament which is broadly considered the earliest and shortest gospel.

So, we have an example of two of the godliest men alive, perhaps to have ever lived disagreeing on the character and maturity of someone. The disagreement prevails to the point where they can no longer continue together.

John Mark wrote the gospel of Mark, which was sourced by Peter.

What other books in the New Testament are relevant to this passage today?

Galatians, Mark, and 1&2 Timothy

II. A New Companion (16:1-5)

What does the name "Timothy" mean? Timothy means "honoring God."

Paul probably wanted Timothy to replace John Mark.

The end of the Jewish religion and the consummate establishment of the gentile focus happens in 70AD when the temple is destroyed and the sacrificial system is completely and utterly done away with. At this time, the temple still stood and there was a cutover time in effect.

Why did Paul circumcise Timothy? Paul circumcised Timothy so that Timothy could go with him to preach the gospel to Jews without having them unnecessarily offended. Paul circumcised Timothy for the sake of the gospel. It is shocking to most that Paul, after having defended the pure gospel of salvation by faith alone, over and against the claim of the Judaizers that one needed to become Jewish before becoming a Christian, now, circumcises Timothy. What is necessary to understand is that even though his commitment to the content of the gospel is unwavering, he understands that in order for some people to give them a hearing, he must not unnecessarily offend them.

The text says that people in those parts knew that he had previously been uncircumcised, and this would have prohibited him from having an audience with the Jews who they were trying to reach.

1Cor 9:19-22 says "Although I am free from all and not anyone's slave, I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people. 20 ***To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win those under the law.*** 21 To those who are without the law, like one without the law—though I am not without God's law but under the law of Christ—to win those without the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some."

The gospel is more important than our personal freedoms and we are free to give up those freedoms if the gospel is at stake.

III. The Macedonian Call (16:6-10)

Paul has tried to go north and south and both times the Spirit stopped him. We do not know exactly what this means or what the circumstances were or how Paul ascertained this. Nevertheless, that is how Paul understood it. Perhaps there is a word there for us when we make decisions. I tend to say God, by Your grace and through Your wisdom we plan to do such and such. If that is not right, or good, or if there be some sinful desire motivating us, or if it be to our detriment, please stop it. And, you know what, in more than one occasion, He did stop something.

In v9, Paul goes on to have a dream or vision of a man from Macedonia saying "come over and help us." Immediately, in v10, Paul concludes that God called "us" to preach the gospel to them.

Who is the "we" in v10? **Luke is added to the group of men traveling to spread the gospel.**

IV. The Conversion of Lydia (16:11-15)

Phillipi was a city named for Phillip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great.

Lydia is the first recorded convert on the European continent. The world would never be the same. The church in the west was born and although it would take some time, eventually, the world would be Christianized and Christendom would be established. Eventually, people would even move to America and even create a Christian nation. Oh, that God would renew our hearts for this glorious gospel that built the west so long ago.

God opened Lydias heart to the gospel (v14). God is the one who did it. Lydia wasn't necessarily smart or savvy. She did not "accept Jesus as her personal Lord and savior." God decided to open her heart to pay attention to the things said by Paul. He did the work, He gets the credit and the glory.

Here we see one aspect of the doctrine of election in full operation. This is irresistible grace. When God opens the dead eyes and heart to see and believe, there is no resisting. He sovereignly moves and changes lives. This is what is known also as the illumination of the Spirit. The Spirit of God must enlighten, open, and brighten one's senses to the gospel. Blind, deaf, and dead people cannot and will not hear. God must regenerate the hearer for them to be able and willing to respond. God pierces the heart and changes the heart of stone into a heart of flesh. He uses His word but that word, if the Spirit of God does not come down, is a word only to judgement. In this case however, it was the word unto life because God sovereignly communicated to and transformed the sinner into a saint.

She and her whole household were baptized (v15). Lydia was the leader of her household that most likely included children and possibly servants. This paradigm is the norm in the book of Acts and the New Testament. When a head of household is saved, He and his whole household are baptized. They identify as a family more than individuals. They receive the sign and seal of the covenant, just like a convert to Judaism would have done. Like Abraham, when he was called, circumcised all his family and his servants. So too, we who are of the faith, are to consecrate our families under the covenant of God, governing them to be obedient to the faith of their father. Calvin, writing 1500 years later says of this verse, "Furthermore, if this duty be required at the hands of the householder, much more of a prince, that he suffer not so much as him lieth the name of god to be profaned in his realm." -Calvin's Commentaries, Acts; p.105. This is what was spoke of earlier in regard to the west having been won to Christ and His dominion, aka kingdom come.

There are at least two things that are superior to circumcision: 1) it is not restricted to males only. Baptism is for both males and females 2) it is not a painful surgery, but instead more like a ritual washing.

I know that we have recovering Baptists here and the idea of believers' baptism is deeply rooted. Here you see both, believers' baptism and pedobaptism. When Lydia is converted, she and her household were baptized. When someone is converted, they are baptized along with

those they represent. When those people have children, they would likewise receive baptism as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace that the family has received.

We have books available on the table that outline this topic more thoroughly and I invite everyone to take one and read it.

Application:

1. Recognize that conflict is inevitable but ensure it's about things that matter. We are not always going to get along. If that is the case, let our conflict be over things of substance and commitment, not petty personal preferences.
2. Value the gospel above all else. The gospel of Jesus is more important than anything else. It is the pearl of great price. It is the thing worth losing my life for. It is the message of life, and truth, and salvation. Nothing else compares. Value the gospel.
3. Be baptized, you and your whole household.

Closing Prayer:

Indeed, Lord, would you send Your Spirit in this place, in the Permian Basin, to save and change men and women, teenagers, boys and girls? Would you use us to proclaim the gospel to this dry and thirsty land? Pour out your Spirit in power and change us. Give us a heart for evangelism. Put the gospel boldly in our mouths. And now, as we take the Lord's supper, we remember the death of the Lord Jesus, that He gave His life as a ransom for many. In His name we pray, Amen.