

## Acts Chapter 16

### 2. The churches revisited, 16:1-6

**Special Note:** We are now about 20 years from the founding of the church. Paul's second missionary journey took place from about A.D. 49-52. It is around this time Paul writes the letter to the Galatians, A.D. 50.

*Acts 16:1 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek,*

#### **Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra**

Paul is moving in a northern direction. This route would bring him through his hometown of Tarsus, (Acts 9:11). When Barnabas was working in Antioch, he went to Tarsus to find Saul and brought him back to help in the work. (Acts 11:25)

These are also cities he had visited on his first missionary journey, excluding Tarsus.

#### **And a disciple was there, named Timothy,**

It is possible that Timothy is a convert of Paul's, 1Tim. 1:2, 1Cor. 4:17. If Timothy is a convert of Paul he probably converted him on his first missionary journey, 2Tim. 10,11.

**Note:** It is believed that Timothy was at least 21 at this time (Lenski). Paul refers to Timothy as young in 1Tim. 4:12. The word of the Lord came to Lystra and Derbe on Paul's first missionary journey. He was on that trip for approximately two or three years, (see notes chap 14:28). It is also believed that time frame of the trip to Jerusalem and just before Paul leaves on the second missionary journey is about 1 year (see notes chap 15:36). Subtracting these from the assumed age of Timothy on Paul's second missionary journey and Timothy was around 17 when he was converted. (But this is just an assumption).

**the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek,**

Timothy's mother is Eunice, 2Tim. 1:5.

*Acts 16:2 and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.*

**and he was well spoken of**

From the Greek “emartureito” meaning “a continuous witness”

**by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.**

Timothy's reputation was widespread. His Christian life was a great example.

*Acts 16:3 Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.*

**Paul wanted this man to go with him;**

Paul had a desire to train Timothy, being a young Christian, 2 Tim 2:2

**and he took him and circumcised him**

Although Eunice had raised Timothy according to the OT scriptures, he was not compelled to be circumcised, 2Tim. 3:14,15.

**because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.**

As we know from chapter 15 circumcision was not required for salvation. The only reason to circumcise him now was to prevent any obstacle from getting in the way of the work Paul was going to do amongst non-believing Jews. They knew Timothy's father was a Greek, (Gentile). (see 1Cor. 9:20)

*Acts 16:4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.*

*Acts 16:5 So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.*

**So the churches were being strengthened in the faith**

Strengthened “estereounto” - The churches were made firm and solid

*Acts 16:6 They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;*

**They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region,**

This is where we find Pisidian Antioch of Acts 13:14ff, where Paul had been on his first missionary journey.

**having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;**

The area of Asia represents the provinces of Lydia, Mysia. Here we find such cities as Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea.

How they were forbidden is not indicated. We only know that the Holy Spirit intervened to keep them moving in a direction He wanted.

**3. The Macedonian call, 16:7-10**

*Acts 16:7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;*

**and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia,**

Mysia is a province northwest of Pisidian Antioch. Bithynia is a province north of Pisidian Antioch.

**and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;**

Here Luke writes it was the Spirit of Jesus that would not allow Paul to go to Bithynia.

*Acts 16:8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.*

The only direction left for Paul was west and he ends up at the coast of the Aegan Sea in Troas. They have traveled some 300 miles from Antioch Pisidia. No church was established along this route during this time.

*Acts 16:9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."*

Once in Troas Paul has a vision. Vision is from the Greek “horama” which includes something that is seen. The call is for Paul to go into Europe and help. This is of course a call for the gospel.

*Acts 16:10 When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*

There was no delay in going to Macedonia. The vision was at night and the very next day they sought passage on a ship, v. 11.

This is the first time we see the mention of Luke in the book of Acts. We see this in the word “we.” (Review Introduction - point 1 - Author)

The question that arises is where did Luke come from. He has never mentioned himself in past chapters, but is now on the scene and is a companion of Paul. He also refers to himself as one called to preach. Did God direct Paul to Troas to meet up with Luke? The answer is never given.

#### **4. Onto Macedonia, 16:11-17:15**

##### **a. Philippi, 16:11-40**

###### **(1) Lydia, 16:11-15**

*Acts 16:11 So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;*

They wasted no time in getting to where God was sending them.

**we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;**

The term “straight course” is a nautical term, which refers to sailing straight before a favorable wind without having to tack. In Acts 20:6 it took Paul five days to get from Philippi to Troas. The fact that they made this first journey so quickly might indicate Gods hand at work.

*Acts 16:12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.*

**and from there to Philippi,**

Philippi is about 12 miles from Neapolis

*Acts 16:13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.*

**And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer;**

Philippi did not have a synagogue and apparently the riverside was a place of worship. It is possible they were informed of this while in town. The lack of a synagogue also indicates a low Jewish population, (Acts 18:2). Philippi might have followed this decree of Claudius At least ten men were required to organize a synagogue according to the rule of the rabbis.

**and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.**

Not only were there very few Jews, the ones who met were women.

*Acts 16:14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.*

**A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira,**

Thyatira is in Asia in the province of Lydia. Lydia is a common Roman name.

**a seller of purple fabrics,**

Thyatira was famous for its purple dyes. It was used for the Roman togas and other purple cloth. The dye came from a shellfish and it is said that only one drop at a time was produced. This made it very valuable. Thus Lydia was probably a very wealthy woman. Luke 16:19

**a worshiper of God,**

The word worshiper here is “sebomene” and means “a God-fearer, or proselyte of the gate.”

**was listening;**

In the Greek this is prosechin and means to hold the mind on, or to keep the mind centered on.”

**and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.**

As she listened to the words of Paul her mind was enlightened by the words spoken. She believed because she understood fully the message Paul preached, Acts 2:36-38. This is not some direct operation of the Holy Spirit. As a proselyte of the gate she would have had some understanding of Jewish Law and traditions and thus Paul could guide her to the truth.

*Acts 16:15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.*

Notice that her response is the same as all others who believe the gospel, she, and her household were baptized. This indicates that Paul preached baptism, contrary to what some say about 1 Cor. 1:17.

The first convert in Europe is a woman of gentile ancestry.

## (2) The soothsaying maid, 16:16-18

*Acts 16:16 It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.*  
**It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer,**

Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke were staying with Lydia in her house, 16:15. They must have stayed for some time and were returning to the place of prayer by the river looking for others to speak to.

**a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us,**

The term spirit of divination means the spirit of python. This is in reference to “Python” the spirit that traditionally guarded the oracle of Delphi until it was slain by the god Apollo. The word was then used for people who professed to reveal the future. Later it came to mean ventriloquist. (Lenski)

**who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.**

In this case the girl was possessed by a demon,v.18, which caused the girl to act in ways that people believed to be helpful to them. They saw her as one who is able to speak from the gods. They believed she could tell the future. Yet no demon has that power. Did the demon not know it would be cast out in a few days?

Her owners (plural) had bought her and used her to make MUCH profit

*Acts 16:17 Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."*

The fact that she they met her as they were going to the place of prayer might indicate how she knew what they were doing. Yet it was not uncommon for demons to bear testimony of the Divine, Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:24; 3:11

*Acts 16:18 She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.*

Paul did not want the testimony of the spirit of divination. He did not see it as having a positive affect on his work. It is possible he believed they would see what he was doing as something coming from their Greek gods rather than from God.

Paul cast out the spirit by the authority of Jesus, Mark 16:17, the evil spirit obeyed immediately.

### **(3) Paul and Silas in prison, 16:19-26**

*Acts 16:19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,*

**But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone,**

The removal of the evil spirit must have been noticeable.

**they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,**

What takes place is the reaction of those who do not care for the truth. They are upset because they have lost their means of profit.

*Acts 16:20 and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews,*

**and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates,**

The magistrate is literally the leader of an army or general. In civic life it meant governor. They commonly referred to themselves as "praetors." The Roman praetors were accompanied by "lictors." Who bore rods with which to punish people.

**they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews,**

This statement is probably in response to the fact that the Jews had been expelled from Rome. They are using as a means of punishing Paul and Silas

*Acts 16:21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."*

Roman law forbade Romans to introduce or practice any new religion. When Paul and Silas proclaimed Jesus, they were preaching a new religion and subject to persecution.

**Note:** Paul and his companions did not violate Rom 13:1ff or 1Pet. 2:13 in what they did, although contrary to Roman law, because of Acts 4:12-20; 5:27-29

*Acts 16:22 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.*

**The crowd rose up together against them,**

There was not time for Paul to defend himself. As a Roman citizen he should have had opportunity, but the crowd was already riled up and any protest of Paul went unheard.

**and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.**

There robes were removed and they were beaten with rods. Paul speaks of this beating in 2Cor. 11:25.

*Acts 16:23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;*

**When they had struck them with many blows,**

The Jewish law required 39 stripes, 2Cor. 11:24. The Romans had no such custom, so at the whim of the judge Paul and Silas were beaten with many blows

**they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;**

The requirement to guard them securely means the jailer was to held responsible for them at the cost of his own life, Acts 12:4. This is why he put them into the inner prison

*Acts 16:24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

**and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison**

Roman prisons had three chambers or compartments; (1) the communiora, or where prisoners had light and fresh air; (2) the interiora, shout of by strong iron gates with bars and locks; (3) the tullianum, or dungeon. This was the place that those who were condemned to die were kept.

**and fastened their feet in the stocks.**

To make sure they could not escape even their feet were put in stocks. These stocks kept the feet spread wide apart causing great pain and inhibited blood circulation.

*Acts 16:25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;*

**But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God,**

What a great show of faith by Paul and Silas. In the midst of their suffering at this late hour they choose to praise God rather than to complain.

**and the prisoners were listening to them;**

This imprisonment became an opportunity to evangelize as the others listened.

**Note:** What about our lives. When people see us in our times of despair do they see us praising God or complaining about or sorry condition?

*Acts 16:26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.*

**and suddenly there came a great earthquake,**

It seems that the prayers of Paul and Silas are answered. God chooses to free His servants in a most noticeable way. Compare this to Peter, **Acts 12:5-11; 18,19**

**so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken;**

The strength of this earthquake was such that it was felt even in the depths of the prison.

**and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.**

So powerful was this earthquake it caused the doors to be opened. The came unhinged and their locks and bars fell away. The chains anchored to the wall fell free and they were unfastened. This is a very controlled earthquake, not a person is hurt.

#### **(4) The jailer, 16:27-34**

*Acts 16:27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.*

Their singing had not awoken him, but the earthquake did. The first thing he noticed was the open doors. This could only mean one thing the prisoners had escaped. His life was now forfeited so he drew his sword to kill himself. This would have been better than allowing the Romans to kill him.

*Acts 16:28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"*

Apparently the other prisoners did not have time to escape or were too frightened to escape. Either way they were all there a Paul called out to the jailer to stop him from committing suicide.

*Acts 16:29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,*

**And he called for lights and rushed in,**

Apparently Paul could see the jailer in some light and was able to stop him, the jailer on the other hand saw only darkness in the cells. Not until he had called for lights and rushed in did he find all the prisoners.

**and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,**

This fear seems to come from the fact that he connects Paul and Silas' God with the earthquake. There was no need to fear his superiors, no prisoners had escaped.

*Acts 16:30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

**and after he brought them out,**

He did not keep them in the prison, the earthquake proved he could not anyway.

It is possible he took them to his house, v.31

**he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"**

This statement indicates that the guard had heard of what Paul and Silas were teaching. He must have been aware of the events that had transpired with the demon-possessed maiden. Remember her proclamation, Acts 16:17

*Acts 16:31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

For the jailer to be saved he had to have faith in Jesus. He had to trust in Jesus over all else, Acts 4:12, Rom. 5:1, Eph. 2:8. This was a direct simple answer to his question and it extended to his household and each would have to do the same.

*Acts 16:32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.*

Though it is by faith that he could be saved, Paul explains what faith entails. The jailer could not believe in the Lord Jesus until had to be taught what to believe in. It was then imperative that the word of the Lord had to be preached, Rom 10:17.

*Acts 16:33 And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.*

**And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds,**

When the jailer had thrown Paul and Silas in prison, he could care less of their physical condition. But now he is a changed man as demonstrated in this act of repentance. He heard of God's mercy for him and so he shows mercy to them.

**and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household**

In the very same water in which he washed Paul and Silas he and his household obeyed the gospel call of salvation. He and his household were baptized just as Lydia had done, Acts 16:14,15. This baptism was for the forgiveness of sins, Acts 2:38. And since this was an urgent matter it was done immediately.

*Acts 16:34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.*

Now is the time to rejoice. After he heard of Christ. After he repented of his sins. After he was baptized. After he was saved.

**Note:** Belief in Jesus is consummated in what he did. He heard the word of the Lord, then he was baptized, then he rejoiced, *having believed in God with his whole household*. Belief is not belief until full trust is placed in God and His will. This means trusting in what He says is needed for salvation, 1Pet. 3:21

### **(5) Paul claims Roman citizenship, 16:35-40**

*Acts 16:35 Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men."*

The magistrates have no idea of what has taken place. There is no reason given as to why they are going to release them after such harsh punishment, but this is what they do. According to v.37 it seems that they might have become uneasy about what they had done because they wanted to send them away secretly.

*Acts 16:36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace."*

It seems as if the jailer, although now a Christian had returned Paul and Silas to jail. It is unlikely that they would be coming out of his house. If this is the case they did this willingly to keep him out of trouble. With joy he can tell them to go in peace.

*Acts 16:37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out."*

**But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison;**

Paul levels four serious charges against the magistrates, (1) publicly beating them; (2) beating without a trial; (3) beating Roman citizens; (4) throwing them into prison.

**and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out."**

The magistrates had done this publicly and now wanted to secretly send them away. Paul was not going to stand for this. To allow this to go unchecked is would have tarnished their reputation. They would have been seen as they were treated, criminals. Vindication is needed to further their work for the Lord.

*Acts 16:38 The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans,*

**The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates.**

The policemen were the ones who had done the beating and the chief magistrates were the ones who ordered it.

**They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans,**

They were afraid because of the penalty that accompanied this kind of treatment of a Roman citizen. To wrongfully accuse a Roman citizen was a grave offense. Ultimately, if found guilty, they would be put to death and their possessions confiscated. They did not question Paul's claim to Roman citizenship because such a claim, if false, was death. It was seldom that one would make such a claim knowing the severe penalty that awaited them if caught.

*Acts 16:39 and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city.*

What Paul had been demanding, he got. They come to them publicly and begged them to leave. They did not want any more trouble and figured if Paul and Silas left all would be forgotten.

*Acts 16:40 They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.*

Paul and Silas go back to where they were staying and probably recount what took place at the prison. This would encourage the brethren; knowing that God was with them in their trials. They would also be encouraged to continue teaching knowing that the magistrates would no longer bother them.

It also seems that Paul and Silas were willing to leave Philippi. Luke says that after going to Lydia's they departed.