

ACTS 16

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**“PLEASE COME HELP US”**

THE GOSPEL COMES TO EUROPE



So the men were sent off [from the Council at Jerusalem] and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. <sup>31</sup> The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. <sup>32</sup> Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. <sup>33</sup> After spending some time there, they were sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. <sup>35</sup> But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.

ACTS 15.30-35

## POST-COUNCIL MINISTRY

- ▶ Paul and Barnabas, with representatives from Jerusalem, Judas (aka Barsabbas) and Silas, returned to Antioch with the response of the Council to the controversy caused by the Pharisee believers.
- ▶ The believers at Antioch were encouraged and strengthened by both the decision of the Council and the prophetic ministry of Judas and Silas. Encouraging and strengthening churches and believers is a frequent focus of ministry throughout Acts.
- ▶ Paul and Barnabas (with many others) “taught and preached the word of the Lord.”

*[Jesus] commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.*

*—Peter speaking at Cornelius’ house, Acts 10.42*

***“taught and preached the word of the Lord.”***

*“preach” (kerusso) - to proclaim as a herald, to noise abroad; to preach the gospel with its attendant privileges and obligations, the gospel dispensation*

- ▶ Preaching commanded by Jesus

*“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

*—Mark 16.15; cf. Matthew 24.14; Luke 24.47*

- ▶ With prayer, it is the common characteristic of disciples and churches throughout Acts (Jerusalem, Samaria, Lebanon, Antioch; Peter, John, Philip, Paul and Barnabas, others)
- ▶ Priority of the apostles (Acts 6.4; 18.5)
- ▶ Priority of the church at Antioch (Acts 11.26; 15.35)
- ▶ The preaching of the gospel must be the priority of a pastor and will be evidence of both Christ-followers and churches who have their spiritual priorities in order (cf. Acts 2.42).



Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” <sup>37</sup> Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, <sup>38</sup> but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. <sup>39</sup> They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, <sup>40</sup> but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. <sup>41</sup> He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

ACTS 15.36-41

# SECOND MISSIONS OUTREACH

- ▶ 3 years
- ▶ 2 continents
- ▶ 6 Roman Provinces
- ▶ 2700 miles
- ▶ 9 of Paul's 13 letters would be connected to ministry and relationships formed during this outreach





Paul went first to Derbe and then to Lystra, where there was a young disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek. <sup>2</sup> Timothy was well thought of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium, <sup>3</sup> so Paul wanted him to join them on their journey. In deference to the Jews of the area, he arranged for Timothy to be circumcised before they left, for everyone knew that his father was a Greek. <sup>4</sup> Then they went from town to town, instructing the believers to follow the decisions made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day.

ACTS 16.1-5 NLT

## TIMOTHY

- ▶ A young disciple at Lystra (*some commentators believe that Timothy was not yet 20 years old*), yet well-regarded by the believers in Lystra and Iconium
- ▶ Despite his young age, Paul saw a heart, spirit, and understanding of the Scriptures in this young man, convincing Paul that Timothy would be a compatible and complimentary partner to him and Silas
- ▶ Just months later, Paul would write to the church at Philippi—  
*“I hope to send Timothy to you soon . . . I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.*

*Philippians 2.19-22*

***What made Timothy—at such a young age—so spiritually mature as a follower of Christ that the most outstanding—and driven—apostle considered him an invaluable addition to his ministry?***

- ▶ Timothy's grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice, had made a lifelong discipling investment in Timothy—

*“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know from whom you have learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through Christ Jesus.”*

- ▶ A parent's most important responsibility is to disciple their children to know the Scriptures and have a strong, living faith in Christ

*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

*—Deuteronomy 6.4-9*



Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. <sup>7</sup> Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there. <sup>8</sup> So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas. <sup>9</sup> That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” <sup>10</sup> So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.

ACTS 16.6-10 NLT

## CRITICAL APPLICATION

- ▶ When was the last time you experienced the Holy Spirit directing your life in witness and mission to eternally lost people?
- ▶ The salvation of lost people is the highest priority of Jesus— *“he ever lives to save completely”* (Hebrews 7.25). The Lord of the harvest has a plan, but do we? If we aren't clear about His plan and engaged in that plan, we aren't engaged with His heart.
- ▶ Do we see and hear what is happening in the spiritual realm? People are begging for spiritual help; can you hear them or are your spiritual ears deaf to their desperate cries?
- ▶ God wants all people to be saved (1 Timothy 2.4); Satan wants all people to be eternally damned. Therefore, it is a cruel and evil thing for a Christian to be unmoved or unwilling to go and tell others of how to be saved through Jesus.

## PHILIPPI

- ▶ On the Via Egnatia, the main travel route across Greece, from the Adriatic Sea to Byzantium (modern-day Istanbul), linking Rome to Asia; 15 miles inland from Neopolis where the missions team disembarked
- ▶ The site where Brutus and Cassius were defeated by Mark Antony and Octavian (later known as Caesar Augustus); after the victory, many veterans settled there and Philippi was made a Roman colony, entitled to the Law of Italy with its privileges and immunities
- ▶ Beginning with Philippi, Paul implemented a missions strategy of evangelism and church planting in major cities and towns on well-traveled routes
- ▶ Philippi, the first church plant in Europe, proved to be “Spirit-strategic”—Philippi would be the key supporter of Paul in his missions work throughout Macedonia and Achaia

## AN EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM MODEL

### (1) Look for gatherings of people and receptive audiences

*On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. . . . she and the members of her household were baptized. (vss. 13-15)*

- ▶ We are called into partnership with God as his co-workers (2 Corinthians 5.20): our role is to share the gospel; the Lord will open the hearts of the hearers.
- ▶ What they didn't do: wait in a building for unbelievers to show up

**(2) Address the works and manifestations of darkness with the authority of Jesus and the power that comes through prayer**

- ▶ This fortune-telling slave girl spoke the truth about the missionaries but by the ability of a demonic spirit and with a deceptive twist.
- ▶ Confronted by the authority of the name of Jesus, that day the kingdom of darkness lost (v.19). Satan does not like to lose, so either back down or expect a backlash! But if we let darkness remain unchallenged, it means:
  - ▶ We are aiding and abetting the enemy;
  - ▶ We don't really trust the power and name of Jesus;
  - ▶ We don't value the work of Christ on the cross or truly care about the destiny of those in Satan's grip.

### (3) Trust God to use difficulty and hardship for His greater purposes

- ▶ False accusations and racial innuendo resulted in beating and incarceration
- ▶ Paul and Silas “were praying and singing hymns to God” (v. 25)

*I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” (Psalm 34.1)*

- ▶ They praised God knowing that they were in God’s perfect will; He had led them to Philippi and He was in control.
- ▶ They praised God because they had been “counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus” (cf. Acts 5.41).
- ▶ They praised and worshipped because they knew that others were listening—they knew that their response to the injustice they had experienced would affect their testimony for Jesus and determine the spiritual destiny of others.

*Paul and Silas knew that, ultimately, it was not about them and what had happened to them— it was about the kingdom of God prevailing over the kingdom of darkness and spiritually desperate people being rescued.*

- ▶ God supernaturally addressed their injustice and predicament with an earthquake!

*Don't underestimate what God can do on your behalf—if you keep your eyes on Him and your heart in a place of trust.*

- ▶ The final outcome—

- ▶ The gospel was preached;
- ▶ The jailer and his family were saved and baptized;
- ▶ Paul and Silas received medical treatment and legal exoneration;
- ▶ The first church in Europe had been established—culturally, socially, and economically diverse, and deeply committed to the Mission.

*If we were here in church together this morning, we would sing—*

*“I’ll go where You want me to go, dear Lord;*

*O’er mountain, or plain, or sea;*

*I’ll say what You want me to say, dear Lord,*

*I’ll be what You want me to be.”*

*As Jesus listened to your voice and looked into your heart,*

*would He see that you were truthful or lying?*