

Friends, don't get me wrong. By no means do I count myself as an expert in all of this, but I've got my eyes on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

Philippians 3:13-14 The Message Bible

First Love Ministries, Inc.

Prayer Study #244

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

CHAPTER 16

Derbe and Lystra: Timothy Is Circumcised

1. Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek.
2. He was well spoken by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.
3. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they knew that his father was Greek.
4. And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.
5. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily.

This is the first mention, I believe, of Timothy or Timotheus, in the Bible. I am a big fan of Timothy, and here in this first mention he is referred to as being *well-spoken by the brethren*. How we need young Timothys with the fire of the Spirit and the consistency of testimony and faithfulness to his calling that we find in this young man.

Lockyer in his excellent book *All the Men of the Bible*-he also has *All the Women of the Bible*-tell us that Timothy was a child of godly heritage (2nd Timothy 1:5). His mother Eunice was a Messianic Jew. His grandmother Lois was a devout Jew. I suspect that Paul led all three: Timothy, Eunice, and Lois to Christ on his first trip to Lystra with Barnabas. We don't really know, but presumably Timothy's Greek father was dead. At any rate we do not even know his name. As a child, Timothy read scripture and knew the Truth (2nd Timothy 3:15). He was Paul's spiritual son (1st Corinthians 4:17; 1st Timothy 1:2; 2nd Timothy 1:2). Some believe that after Paul's stoning at Lystra, he stayed with Eunice and Timothy as he recovered. Timothy was an ordained minister of the Gospel (1st Timothy 4:14; 2nd Timothy 1:6-7). He was chosen by Paul to restore a backslidden church (1st Corinthians 4:17) and also to bring comfort to believers in the midst of persecution (1st

Thessalonians 3:2). He suffered with Paul for the Gospel's sake (2nd Timothy 1:8).

Tradition says that he was murdered by an angry mob in Ephesus. We think that Timothy might have had a spirit of fear at an earlier age, and Paul addresses this in 2nd Timothy 1:7. It was the Festival of Diana, and he, much bolder in old age, tried to stop an indecent procession, making the frenzied participants very angry. He was 80 years old. Paul had appointed Timothy to the Church of Ephesus. This we know from the writings of Polycarp. Paul had been beheaded by Nero many years before, and Timothy had worked in conjunction with John after the death of Paul, but John even outlived Timothy. According to tradition, the rioting crowd beat Timothy to death with rods they were carrying. The tops of these rods had images of false gods. Timothy left behind the largest Christian church in all of Asia Minor.

When we first read here that Paul took Timothy and circumcised him, we might be confused and wonder why Paul would do such a thing. The reason he circumcised Timothy was because Timothy was half Jewish, and Paul believed that the Jewish believers should be circumcised, but not the Gentiles. What he did was actually a very liberal thing to do because most strict Jews would not have accepted Timothy as a Jew since he was only half Jew. Paul did not believe there was any merit in circumcision. He just did not want any kind of argument from the Jews about this issue (see 1st Corinthians 9:19-20).

This was a very successful start. Paul visits the churches already established in Galatia, and there is an increase in the number of new believers daily.

Troas: Macedonian Call

6. Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.
7. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.
8. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.
9. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."
10. Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Paul was in Asia and intended to evangelize Asia, but the Holy Spirit had different plans for him. It must have seemed strange to Paul that he was being called away from Asia. Asia was the center of the Roman provinces and contained Ephesus and all the churches mentioned in Revelation. The Holy Spirit may have spoken through a prophet, by a dream or vision, or by an inner conviction. Then Paul has a vision directing him to Macedonia which is in Europe.

Verse 10 is very important. For the first time, Luke, the writer of Acts and actually the writer, as far as number of words, of most of the New Testament uses *we*. Luke was a Gentile Christian and a medical doctor. Apparently, Luke, who was from Macedonia, has joined Paul's missionary team. Some have speculated that Paul might have been sick and needed a physician. We don't know, but we do know that there were at least four men in their group who crossed over into Europe: Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke

Lydia Is Converted

11. Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis,

12. And from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.

13. And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.

14. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

15. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

In Philippi, build by Alexander the Great's father Philip, was a Roman outpost. Rome had planted a small military, mostly made up of military veterans, and insisted on Roman laws, the Latin language, and Roman dress.

There was no Jewish synagogue in Philippi. Where there was no synagogue, the Jews had a place of prayer, and these places were usually by a riverside, so Paul and company had no trouble finding the Jewish remnant that was in these places. The particular group happened to be mostly women and included a Jewish woman by the name of Lydia.

Lydia was from Thyratira, one of the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3. Thyratira was one of the Macedonian colonies and had a strong Jewish

element. In Revelation Thyratira is rebuked for being in idolatry and for allowing a Jezebel to lead the Lord's servants away from some of the strong positions of scripture. She was a businesswoman who specialized in selling purple dyed cloth. She was not a Christian when she met Paul, but she was a seeker of spiritual truth and accepted Christ. We believe she was wealthy since she apparently had a spacious home to houseguests and had servants.

A Spirit of Divination Is Cast Out

16. Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.
17. This girl followed Paul and us and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."
18. And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.
19. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.
20. And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city;
21. "and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."
22. Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods.
23. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely.
24. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

This girl was possessed by a demon, and we call this demon *the Spirit of Python*. The ancient people valued and respected those whom they perceived as insane. They thought that the gods had taken away her senses so that the gods could replace it with the mind of the gods. Today we know that most of the insane need deliverance ministry.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "For the love of money is the root of all evil... (1st Timothy 6:10). These men were evil, much like the owners of sex slaves are today. They were interested in the profit this slave girl brought in, and they were very angry that Paul had cast this demon out.

Philippian Jailer Is Converted

25. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.
26. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.
27. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.
28. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."
29. Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.
30. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
31. So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."
32. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.
33. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.
34. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed God with all his household.

In the darkness hour, after a severe beating, Paul and Silas are in jail singing praises to the Lord. The Lord inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3), and where the Lord is, there is liberty (2nd Corinthians 3:17).

The Lord has given us great power in praise, and He has given us many scriptural ways, according to our individual personalities, to praise Him. These include :

- a. With the whole heart (Psalm 9:1)
- b. With praise that can be heard (Psalm 66:8)
- c. With shouting (Psalm 47:1)
- d. With singing (Psalm 47:6)
- e. With a joyful noise (Psalm 66:1 & 2)
- f. With crying out (Isaiah 12:6)
- g. With laughter (Psalm 126:2)
- h. With skill on musical instruments (Psalm 33:2)
- i. With thanksgiving (Psalm 69:30)
- j. By bowing and kneeling before Him (Philippians 2:10-11)

- k. By falling prostrate before Him (1st Corinthians 14:25, Psalm 72:11; Nehemiah 8:6)
 - l. With clapping of hands (Psalm 47:1)
 - m. By raising of hands (Psalm 63:4; 1st Timothy 2:8)
 - n. With dancing (Psalm 30:11)
 - o. By speaking in tongues (Romans 8:26-27; 1st Corinthians 14:14-15)
- Paul gives the answer to salvation: Only believe on Jesus.

Paul Is Released from Prison

35. And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go."
36. So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace."
37. But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out."
38. And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.
39. Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city.
40. So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.
- Paul was not trying to be difficult here. However, to scourge a Roman citizen was a crime punishable by death. What Paul was thinking of were the Christians he was leaving behind. He wanted the magistrates to know that, if they mistreated the Christians, he would be back and possibly report what they had done to him to Rome.

Jesus Be the Lord of All

Jesus, be the Lord of all; Jesus, be the Lord of all.
 Jesus, be the Lord of all the kingdoms of my heart.
 Jesus, I surrender all; Jesus, I surrender all.
 Jesus, I surrender all the kingdoms of my heart.