

BIGGER THAN YOU

Lesson 16 Trust and Trouble

Acts 16:1-40 and 17:1-15

Following the Jerusalem Council, Paul and Silas embark on what has come to be known as “Paul’s Second Missionary Journey”. In this lesson we will see how God directs Paul from Jerusalem to Macedonia, giving the gospel message a foothold in Europe. Everywhere Paul went and preached Christ, trouble followed. Paul is harassed by a demon-possessed slave girl, he is beaten and imprisoned, and on more than one occasion he was run out of town. However, many people believe the gospel, and in this lesson we will study the conversion of two people in particular – a jailer and a woman.

Read Acts 16:1-5

1. In Chapter 15, Paul participated in the Jerusalem Council (verse 12), he was sent to Antioch (verse 30), and then he traveled through the regions of Syria and Cilicia (verse 41). Now in Chapter 16, Paul and Silas travel from town to town delivering the decisions made by the Jerusalem Council.
 - a. Paul returns to Derbe and Lystra, where he had previously preached the gospel (Acts 14:6-7). Using the map on page 3, trace the journey from Jerusalem to the cities of Derbe and Lystra. Note the route from Chapter 15, listed above.
 - b. What do we know about Timothy, who now joins the group? (See also 2 Tim. 1:2-5.)
 - c. Paul is delivering the message from the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-21) about not requiring Gentiles to be circumcised. Why is Timothy circumcised? (See also 1 Cor. 9:20.)
 - d. Discuss our contemporary church’s challenge in navigating between being relevant to the culture and remaining set apart from the culture.
 - e. Give the progress report for the churches Paul is visiting (verse 5).

Read Acts 16:6-10

2. Taking the gospel and the Jerusalem Council decision, Paul continues to travel.
 - a. Using the map, find the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. Did Paul preach in these regions?
 - b. Find the provinces of Asia and Bithynia. Did Paul preach in these regions?
 - c. How does one know whether a “closed door” is guidance from God or opposition to God?
3. Paul is called to Macedonia, another Roman province.
 - a. Where was Paul when he saw a vision? Find it on the map.
 - b. Find Macedonia on the map. Notice that he travels from the continent of Asia to the continent of Europe.
 - c. List the divine names in this passage from verses 6, 7, and 10.
 - d. What picture does this paint of God?
 - e. Notice the change in the personal pronouns in verse 8-10. What might this tell us?
 - f. How did God direct Paul to go to Macedonia?
 - g. Paul concluded that God directed him (verse 10). How do you discern whether you have direction from God?

Read Acts 16:11-15

4. Match the following statements with the appropriate verses (verses may be used more than once):
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| a. In new cities, Paul often started in the synagogue. | _____ | i. Acts 13:14, 14:1 |
| b. Lydia is a business woman and worships God. | _____ | ii. Acts 16:13 |
| c. In Philippi, Paul found a place of prayer. | _____ | iii. Acts 16:14 |
| d. Paul preached to a group of women. | _____ | vi. Acts 16:15 |
| e. The Lord opened Lydia's heart and she believed. | | |
| f. Following her conversion, Lydia practiced hospitality. | | |
| g. Lydia and her household were baptized. | | |
5. Philippi is the first European city to hear the gospel message from Paul. It is a Roman colony on the sea coast.
- Find Philippi on the map. What is the importance of Philippi in that day (verse 12)?
 - Why would Philippi's significance help the spread of the gospel?
 - By preaching to women, how would Paul have been targeting a significant group?
 - Evangelists often target strategic groups. Discuss the pros and cons of this approach.

Read Acts 16:16-24

6. Paul and Silas meet up with trouble in Philippi.
- Describe both the physical and spiritual ways in which the girl was enslaved.
 - How does spiritual bondage and physical bondage often go hand in hand?
 - The slave girl's ambiguous reference to "servants of the Most High God" (verse 17) might be pointed to a Greek god rather than to the one true God. How does Paul point to the one true God (verse 18)?
 - Read Mark 3:11 and Luke 4:33-34 and discuss how Jesus faced similar confrontations.
 - Why are the slave girl's owners upset with Paul and Silas?
 - What are the accusations the owners level against Paul and Silas? Are they valid?
 - Summarize the extent of the attack against Paul and Silas. Why is it so violent?

Read Acts 16:25-40

7. Paul and Silas are thrown into a Roman jail. The jailer is responsible for his prisoners, under the penalty of his own life if they escape. Even in jail, Paul and Silas have a confidence beyond their circumstances.
- What does Paul and Silas's singing say to the other prisoners?
 - Why is the jailer upset (verses 26-27)?
 - From your experience, why does God need to shake our world to get our attention?
 - Why do you think Paul and Silas did not take advantage of the opportunity to escape?
 - Summarize how Paul took advantage of the jailer's distress to present the gospel.
 - Contrast the jailer's demeanor before his conversion and after his conversion (verse 34).
 - Explain whether a parent's faith is automatically inherited by his/her children (verse 31).
 - Describe how Paul and Silas left prison with dignity (verses 35-40).

Read Acts 17:1-9

8. Paul and company travel to Thessalonica, another important city. It is both a seaport and capitol of Macedonia.
- Using the map on page 3, trace Paul's travels from Philippi to Thessalonica.
 - Why did Paul often make his first stop in a city at the synagogue? (See also Acts 13:46.)
 - What method did Paul use to present the gospel in the synagogue? Was it effective?
 - How did some jealous Jews stir up trouble (verses 5-9)?
 - Previously in Acts, jealous Jews have attacked Christians (5:17, 13:45). Why are they jealous?

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

Read Acts 17:10-15

9. Following the opposition in Thessalonica, Paul and Silas are sent to Berea, a city in another Macedonian district.
 - a. Find Berea on the map.
 - b. How could the retreat of Paul and Silas to Berea be described as an advance for the gospel?
 - c. The Bereans have a more noble character than the Thessalonians. How are they more noble?
 - d. Since the Thessalonians cause trouble for Paul even in Berea, what happens to Paul?
 - e. In general, do you think it is a good idea for Christians to avoid confrontation?

10. See recent news and pictures from our church's missionaries on www.oakhillschurch.com; from the menu click on "Missions" and then "News of the Harvest". Discuss how our church, like the Apostle Paul, takes the gospel message across geographical, gender, and ethnic boundaries.



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Acts 1:8