

## THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

### CONFLICT AND NEW DIRECTION, ACTS 15:36-16:10

#### A. Disagreement between Paul and Barnabas (15:36-41)

1. They decided to revisit churches from the First Missionary Journey (36), *And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."*
  - a. The ministry of Paul and Barnabas had been affirmed by the Council of Jerusalem.
  - b. Paul asked Barnabas to join him in checking on the believers in every city where they had proclaimed the Gospel.
    - 1) It would be an opportunity to share the encouraging letter from the Council.
    - 2) Paul had a pastor's heart and wanted to nurture those he had led to faith in Christ.
    - 3) The ministry in Antioch was in good hands but it he had received no news concerning the churches established on the first missionary journey.
2. Paul and Barnabas disagreed concerning taking John Mark with them (37-39a)
  - a. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark (37), *Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.*
    - 1) John Mark was the cousin of Barnabas.
    - 2) He had come to faith along with the apostles.
    - 3) His home was the location of the last supper.
  - b. Paul did not want to take John Mark (38), *But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.*
    - 1) He remembered how John Mark had deserted them on the first missionary journey.
    - 2) It was never told why he left but some believe he was uncomfortable evangelizing non-Jews.
    - 3) He probably feared that John Mark would fail again.
  - c. Paul and Barnabas ended their partnership (39a) *And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other.*
    - 1) *sharp disagreement*
      - a) It comes from the word meaning *provoked, stirred up, aroused.*
      - b) The only other use of this word was used in a positive sense in Hebrews 10:24, *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, to provoke one to good behavior.*
      - c) It was a blowup between two close friends.
      - d) Tom Constable, *Here we have a classic confrontation: the choice between disqualifying a person who has made a major blunder or seeking to restore that person to a ministry role.*
    - 2) God works all things together for good.
      - a) God would use this disagreement for good by turning one missionary journey into two.
      - b) Paul's relationship with John Mark would eventually become strong.
        - 1] John Mark would become one of Paul's helpers, Colossians 4:10, *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him)*
        - 2] He became dear to Paul as seen when Paul was about to die in prison, 2 Timothy 4:11, *Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.*
      - c) Stanley Toussaint, *Probably both Paul and Barnabas were right in their assessments of Mark. It may have been too soon for Mark to venture out with such a pro-Gentile apostle as Paul, but Barnabas certainly and correctly saw good raw material in his cousin Mark.*

3. Paul and Barnabas went separate ways (39b-41)
  - a. Barnabas took Mark and headed to Cyprus (39b), *Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus*,
    - 1) Barnabas returned home to Cyprus.
    - 2) John Mark received ministry from Barnabas that led to spiritual growth and service.
    - 3) Thomas Constable, *Many of us would have dropped out of ministry had it not been for a gracious Barnabas who was willing to give us another chance after we failed.*
  - b. Paul and Silas went through Syria and Cilicia (40-41), *but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.*
    - 1) Silas was chosen by Paul to accompany him.
      - a) Silas was one of the men chosen by the church in Jerusalem to inform the church at Antioch of their decision.
      - b) He was a Roman citizen, note Acts 16:37.
      - c) He was well-respected by the church in Antioch.
    - 2) They were sent out by the church in Antioch.
      - a) Their trip had the church's blessing.
      - b) Again, the church at Antioch was the sending church for another missionary endeavor.
    - 3) They strengthened the churches in Syria and Cilicia.
      - a) Paul and Silas traveled north by land.
      - b) They reversed the order of their first trip probably because Barnabas and Mark went to Cyprus.
      - c) The letter from the Council of Jerusalem had anticipated distribution of the decree to this region, Acts 15:23, with the following letter: *"The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.*

#### B. Ministry in Galatia (16:1-5)

1. Timothy joined the missionary team (1-3), *Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.*
  - a. Paul and Barnabas traveled to the churches in Galatia
    - 1) They probably went through the Taurus Mountains at a pass called the Cilicia Gates. That is where Alexander the Great marched eastward to conquer the Persian Empire 400 years earlier.
    - 2) They stopped at Derbe and Lystra where they had planted churches on their first journey.
  - b. Introduction of Timothy
    - 1) His mother was Jewish and his father was a Greek.
    - 2) Some believe he was converted under Paul's ministry on his first visit to Lystra, 1 Timothy 1:2, *To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*
    - 3) Others believe he was led to the Lord by his mother and grandmother, 2 Timothy 1:5, *I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.*
    - 4) He knew the Scriptures from childhood, 2 Timothy 3:15, *and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*
    - 5) He had a good reputation among those in the churches at Lystra and Iconium.
  - c. Timothy joined the missionary team
    - 1) Paul wanted Timothy to join him in ministry.
      - a) He would probably be a helper like John Mark.
      - b) William Barclay, *He [Paul] was always well aware of the necessity of training a new generation for the work and for the days that lay ahead.*
      - c) A good reputation can open doors to great opportunity.

- 2) There was an issue with Timothy that had to be addressed.
    - a) He was not circumcised due to his father's influence.
    - b) Paul believed he must be circumcised in order to accompany him on this new missionary endeavor.
      - 1] Paul was not siding with the Judaizers. This was not to appease those who believed a person must become a Jew to become a Christian. It was not an issue of justification or sanctification.
      - 2] This was so he would not cause offense to Jews who might be willing to hear the Gospel. It was so he could effectively evangelize Jews who would consider an uncircumcised Jew an apostate.
    - c) Paul emphasized the spiritual futility of circumcision in Galatians 2:3-5, where he refused to let Titus be circumcised because he was a non-Jew.
    - d) Paul circumcised Timothy so as not to give offense (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23), not for the purpose of justification.
  - 3) It was a good decision with lasting results.
    - a) Timothy became a major figure in Christianity.
    - b) He participated in six of Paul's epistles, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:1 and Philemon 1.
    - c) He was the recipient of two epistles, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy.
    - d) Paul called him a son and fellow-worker, 1 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Timothy 1:2, Romans 16:21 and 1 Corinthians 16:10.
    - e) He had a leadership role at Ephesus.
2. They reported the results of the Jerusalem Council to the churches (4), *As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.*
- a. A key means of encouraging the churches was the proclamation of the letter from the Council of Jerusalem.
  - b. The encouragement came not only because there was no need to be circumcised but because they were given things to do that would strengthen them in their testimony to others.
  - c. A. T. Robertson, *The epistle was not meant as a law to bind the Gentiles. It was rather a charter of freedom from Judaism.*
3. The churches were strengthened and grew (5), *So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.*
- a. The ministry of Paul, Silas, and Timothy caused the churches to grow spiritually.
    - 1) Spiritual growth comes through the teaching of sound doctrine.
    - 2) Our faith is based on objective truth that must be understood and obeyed.
  - b. The result of strengthened faith is outward growth.
    - 1) An increase in Christianity is based on sound biblical teaching and not on man-made programs.
    - 2) God honors His word which always bears fruit.
- C. A change of direction (16:6-10)
1. They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to minister in Asia (6-8)
    - a. They traveled through Phrygia and Galatia by the direction of the Holy Spirit (6), *And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.*
      - 1) Phrygia and Galatia
        - a) This was probably the Phrygian region of Galatia.
        - b) This area would be in what is now west central Turkey.
        - c) It is believed Paul was heading toward Ephesus, the largest city in the province of Asia which is on the western coast of what is now Turkey.
      - 2) The Holy Spirit forbade them from evangelizing in Asia.
        - a) They were on the edge of Asia but changed their course away from Ephesus.
        - b) They headed north toward Mysia which was another geographical region within Asia.

- b. They tried to enter Bithynia through Mysia but were supernaturally forbidden and went to Troas (7-8), *And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.*
  - 1) They planned to go through the region of Mysia to get to Bithynia which borders the Black Sea.
  - 2) Again, they were redirected by the Holy Spirit not to enter that region.
    - a) *the Spirit of Jesus*, Luke emphasized the important role Jesus took in directing the missionary effort.
    - b) Kenneth Gangel, *...the theological link of the Holy Spirit in verse 6 with the Spirit of Jesus in verse 7 offers an important affirmation of deity for the third person of the Trinity. Furthermore, Paul links both of these with God in verse 10, so we have a full Trinitarian involvement in this Macedonian call.*
  - 3) They passed through the top of Mysia and arrived at Troas, the port city on the Aegean Sea.
  - 4) God did not forsake the region of Asia.
    - a) Unidentified Christian missionaries evangelized Bithynia, note 1 Peter 1:1.
    - b) Paul evangelized Asia later, as well, Acts 18:18-19:20.
- 2. Paul received a vision directing them to go to Macedonia (9-10), *And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*
  - a. Paul received ministry direction through a vision while at Troas.
    - 1) A man urged him to come to Macedonia and help them.
    - 2) Macedonia was a Roman province corresponding to northern Greece and southern Macedonia, today.
    - 3) God had directed Paul away from one region and now He directed him to another.
  - b. Paul accepted the vision as God's leading.
    - 1) There was no hesitation in the decision to go to Macedonia.
    - 2) They believed God was calling them to take the Gospel to a place where there had been no prior witness.
  - c. This is the first time *we* is used in Acts.
    - 1) Luke is now a part of the Second Missionary Journey.
    - 2) There is no indication in Scripture as to how Luke came to be a part of the team.
  - d. Richard Longenecker, *Authentic turning points in history are few. But surely among them that of the Macedonian vision ranks high. Because of Paul's obedience at this point, the gospel went westward; and ultimately Europe and the Western world were evangelized. Christian response to the call of God is never a trivial thing. Indeed, as in this instance, great issues and untold blessings may depend on it.*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- A. Disagreements arise between Christians but unity is our goal.
- B. God works all things together for good.
- C. God directs His work as He sees fit.