

Paul's Second Journey Begins

Lesson #1

Acts 15:35-16:10

The first missionary journey of Paul began at the church in Antioch, Syria in 46 A.D. The mission team of Paul, Barnabas and John Mark set sail for the island of Cyprus and then traveled on to the region of Galatia. When they reached shore at Perga in Pamphylia, *"John (Mark) left them to return to Jerusalem."* (Acts 13:13) Paul and Barnabas continued on preaching the gospel in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe before returning in 48 A.D. to Antioch, Syria.

Shortly after returning, *"Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: 'Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.'"* (Acts 15:1) The result of this false teaching was two-fold; Paul wrote a letter to the churches in Galatia reminding them that salvation is *"by faith in Jesus Christ"* (Galatians 2:16) and, as the situation grew more tense, a delegation was sent from Antioch to Jerusalem to resolve this issue.

In 50 A.D., a meeting was held in Jerusalem where the issue of *"circumcision required for salvation"* was debated. The issue was much broader than just circumcision; the implication was that all Gentiles must first become Jews before they could be saved. Those speaking at the Council included some believing Pharisees, Peter, Paul, Barnabas and James. *"The decision reached at the Council was given by James, the head of the Jerusalem church. The Council's conclusion was that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised to be saved, but that they should watch their behavior and diet in order not to offend their Jewish brothers. (Specifically, they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.) Letters were sent to the Gentile converts concerning the decision."*¹ (Acts 15:1-35)

The Disagreement - Acts 15:35-41

1. After the Council, Paul and Barnabas had gone back to Antioch. What did the author Luke say they did when they returned? (Acts 15:35)
2. *"Some time later,"* what did Paul ask Barnabas? (Acts 15:36)
3. Barnabas agreed with Paul, then made a suggestion that brought about a sharp dispute.
 - What did Barnabas want to do? (Acts 15:37)

- Why did Paul disagree? (Acts 15:38)
- How did this disagreement end? (Acts 15:39a)

As difficult as this is for us to read, I am glad Luke recorded this event in the book of Acts. The men and women we meet in the pages of the Bible were not perfect, but each tried to live their lives in daily obedience, serving the Lord. This story reminds me of the bumper sticker, "Not perfect, just forgiven." And that brings me great hope!

4. Even in difficult situations like this, God is still at work. Rather than one team of missionaries traveling to the Gentiles, there are now two teams.
 - What did Barnabas do? (Acts 15:39b)
 - What about Paul? (Acts 15:40, 41)

Paul & Silas in Galatia – Acts 16:1-5

5. The men traveled to visit the church at Derbe and then on to Lystra. Please summarize briefly what had taken place the first time Paul was in Lystra.
 - Acts 14:8-10
 - Acts 14:11-13
 - Acts 14:14-18
 - Acts 14:19
 - Acts 14:20
6. Lystra was a memorable place for Paul, not just because of the events that took place there, but because of the people. One of the disciples in Lystra was Timothy. What did Luke record about this young man? (Acts 16:1, 2)

7. Look closely at verse 2. What insight(s) can you discover by “reading between the lines” about these first century believers?
8. Paul decided to take Timothy along on the journey, “so he circumcised him.” Why did Luke say Paul circumcised Timothy? (Acts 16:3)
9. Why do you think Paul felt that this was so important? (Acts 14:1)
10. One of the key motivations for Paul to return to the churches in Galatia was to personally deliver the news of the Jerusalem Council decision. How was that news received by the churches? (Acts 16:5)

Paul's Vision - Acts 16:6-10

11. Paul, Silas and Timothy continued to preach in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia. Why did Paul say they did not go into the province of Asia? (Acts 16:6, 7)
12. Paul stopped at the coastal city of Troas. How did Paul discover where he was to go next? (Acts 16: 9, 10)

Please note the change in verse 10 to “we” and “us.” It is on this second missionary journey of Paul that Dr. Luke became his own eyewitness as he joined the missionary team to move the gospel forward “to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Reflect:

Reread today's text and try to imagine what it may have been like to travel with Paul on these journeys. Did anything stand out to you?

¹ Strauss, Mark; *Acts & the Pauline Epistles* (Draft Manuscript), Bethel Seminary San Diego; 2004, pg. 19