

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 51

I. Exposition of Chapter Fifteen (Continued).

A. Verses 36-41 - Contention over John Mark.

1. Verse 36 – “Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are doing.’” – This shows a “Shepherd’s heart” in the Apostle Paul to care for the people to ensure they were strengthened and staying firm in the faith.
2. Verses 37-39 – Paul and Barnabas disagree pertaining to John Mark going with them. Gary Kinnaman in *The New Spirit Filled Bible* has a good perspective on this:

“The contention (v. 39) between Paul and Barnabas arose over a difference of opinion concerning the inclusion of Mark on the mission team. Paul considered Mark’s departure on the previous journey a desertion (see 13:13). Paul later changed his mind about John Mark (see Col. 4:10). Unfortunately, painful divisions in the body of Christ do occur, but God can turn such things to good. In the case of Paul and Barnabas, there are now *two* missionary teams instead of one (vv. 39, 40). This is the beginning of Paul’s next trip abroad. See map of Paul’s second journey.”¹

3. Verses 39b – 41 – “...And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”
 - a. Barnabas went with Mark to Cyprus which was where Barnabas was from (4:36) and which was the island where Paul and Barnabas had gone to evangelize on the first missionary journey. This is the last time Barnabas and Mark are mentioned in the book of Acts.
 - b. Paul and Silas went Syria and Cilicia “...strengthening the churches.” – The word “strengthening” means; “to cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief”² Thayer’s Lexicon adds the idea of “to make solid”; “to make firm.”³

II. Exposition of Chapter Sixteen.

A. Verses 1-2 – “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. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.”

1. Now he arrives in Derbe, where he had great success on his first missionary journey (14:20-21), and in Lystra, where a crowd tried to honor Paul and Barnabas as pagan gods on the first missionary journey (14:8-18) and later stoned Paul (14:19-20).
2. Lystra was the hometown of Timothy. Some commentators suggest that Timothy became a believer when Paul went there on his first missionary journey. His mother and grandmother also had become believers and, as Jews, had Timothy the Scriptures from the time he was a child (II Timothy 3:15). Timothy became a protégé of Paul’s and eventually became the pastor of the church in Ephesus and the recipient of two of Paul’s letters.

Thomas Constable states:

“At Lystra a young believer named ‘Timothy’ impressed Paul. Many Bible students have assumed that Timothy was from Lystra, and had trusted Christ during Paul’s first trip to that town (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17)...Mixed marriages between Jews and Gentiles were more common outside Palestine than within it. Timothy’s mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois were both sincere Jews, and had instructed Timothy in the Hebrew Scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).”⁴

B. Verse 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 all knew that his father was Greek.”

1. “...he took him and circumcised him...” – This seems like a strange thing to do after the results of the Jerusalem counsel. Grant Osborne makes an important point:

¹*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*, (Nashville, TN, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002), 1520.

²Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 677.

³Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

⁴Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 316.

“At first glance this may seem strange or even wrong since Paul had denied the place of circumcision in salvation. But that’s the key. This was not done for the sake of his spiritual state but for the sake of ministry among the Jews. As such it is a rather remarkable concession for ministry and shows Timothy’s level of dedication.”⁵

C. Verses 4-5 – “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. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.” - So they delivered to the rest of the churches the decree that was determined as we saw in **15:23-29**. Their ministry resulted in them being strengthened in the faith which carries the idea of being more firm and convinced that the message of the Gospel was true. (The word **“strengthened”** is the same word as **“strengthening”** found in **15:41**). The more grounded they became, the more boldness (courage) would come to share with others and, as is seen, they **“...increased in number daily.”**

D. Verses 6-7 – “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. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.”

1. **“...they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.”** – The word **“forbidden”** means; **“to cause something not to happen—to prevent, to hinder.”⁶** This guidance happened twice here as we see in the phrase **“...did not permit them.”** We don’t know how the Holy Spirit communicated this to them but it shows the direct involvement of the Holy Spirit in guiding the apostles. One thing is for sure, Paul states in **Romans 8:14**, **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”** Holy Spirit guidance, in one form or another, should be part of every believer’s life. (cf. **James 1:5-6**).

2. Why would the Holy Spirit forbid them to go into any part of the world when the Great Commission commanded us to go? It must have been the wrong place at the wrong time and the Holy Spirit, Who knows all things, knows how to direct us so that the results will be maximized. **NOTE: “Asia”** does not refer to the Far East as we know it today. It refers to the Roman Province of Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey.

E. Verses 8-10 – “So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 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.’ 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.”

1. Paul receives a **“vision”** from the Lord. Remember Peter’s message on Pentecost pertaining to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, **“...Your young men shall see visions...” (2:17)**. Stanley Horton adds some important information:

“God made the call westward clear in a night vision given to Paul in which a (pagan) Macedonian stood “begging him” to cross over to Macedonia and help them. Immediately Paul and his companions (now including Luke) sought to go over to Macedonia, concluding that God had called them “to preach the gospel to them.” Note that Luke switches from the third to the first person in this, the first of the “we passages” (16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1 through 28:16). Luke hereby lets us know he was with Paul and was an eyewitness of certain events.”⁷

F. Verses 11-15 – In the city of Philippi, they joined a Women’s Prayer Meeting.

1. **Verse 11 – “...on the Sabbath day...”** – This may have been due to there not being a synagogue in Philippi.

2. Regarding this account, Dr. Stanley Horton writes:

“...Paul and his company heard that there was ‘a place of prayer’ about a mile outside the city gate on the bank of the Gangites River. There they sat down and proceeded to talk to ‘the women who had gathered there.’ One of them, Lydia, was a wealthy businesswoman, an independent seller of purple-dyed cloth used by people of power and prestige... She was a God-fearing Gentile originally from Thyatira in the Roman province of Asia, a city famous for its dyes. She probably first learned about the things of God by attending a synagogue in her home city, for there was a large Jewish colony in Thyatira. At Philippi, she continued to pray and seek God. Now she kept listening to Paul. Soon ‘the Lord opened her heart’ to give full attention to the things Paul was saying. The result was ‘she and the members of her household,’ that is, her staff and servants, believed the gospel and were baptized in water.”⁸

⁵Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 292.

⁶Low and Nida, 164.

⁷Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 280.

⁸Ibid., 281-282.