

PAUL'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

Lesson 14

Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Recently I was trying a case in the Northeastern United States. The jury seemed at times bemused when I would use a phrase or word that was natural for me and my Texas vocabulary, but evidently odd for those in the courtroom. One day I was cross-examining a fellow who was particularly disagreeable. He would disagree with anything I ask him. At one point I asked him a relatively simple question on which we truly did agree. Still the fellow was very defensive. Finally I said to him, "Sir, I'm not trying to fuss with you. I simply need to establish some things we agree on."

I found out later that the judge, the jury, and the other lawyers were all chuckling over my use of the word, "fuss." To me, "fuss" is a perfectly good verb that needs to be used occasionally!

Which brings me to my launching question for today's lesson: Have you ever had a fuss with someone? Of course everyone but a hermit would likely answer "yes." So we should make the question more pointed: have you ever had a really sharp disagreement? How about with someone you work with? Who you also go to church with? Who has been a fairly constant companion for years and years? Who has stood by you through tough times as well as good ones? And the final question, have these sharp disagreements ever been over the will of God and his work?

Paul did! Luke records it for us in Acts. In typical Bible fashion, we have key biblical characters set out in their true actions. The Bible does not wash over a big dispute. It reports it as it is necessary for understanding the purposes of the narrative as well as God's overarching design behind his scriptures. This is but one part of what we learn about in today's lesson on Paul's life.

THE STORY

As we continue to study the life of Paul, we have reached an interesting point. In our reconstruction of Paul's life, we have seen him through the formative years of childhood, we have followed his Hebrew training, we have seen his religious zeal drive him to violence and persecution of the church, and we spent time

understanding his salvation experience and its effects on his life. We have also watched him find his place within a church and fellowship he had deeply hurt. We saw how Barnabas entered the picture to help bring Paul into acceptance with the elders and apostles. We saw Paul off on his own trying to find his ministry in isolation; and, we saw Paul called, again by Barnabas, into active teaching in the church at Antioch.

We then saw Paul and Barnabas together, called by God to take the gospel “on the road,” preaching and evangelizing among the dispersed Jews in Asia Minor. As this first missionary trip unfolded, we saw Paul begin to take the primary role as Luke set Barnabas into the second position. This was also the perception of the new churches, as Paul was the principle deliverer of the gospel message. This first missionary trip was one where John Mark, Barnabas’s cousin, began the trip but quit prematurely, leaving Paul and Barnabas to return to his family in Jerusalem.

Through persecution and hard times, Paul and Barnabas saw the gospel message take root throughout southern Galatia and Phrygia. The infant churches began in synagogues with Jews and Gentiles coming to faith. Very quickly, the churches were expelled from the synagogues and became independent fledgling groups, most likely meeting in homes.

Before Paul and Barnabas returned home to Antioch from this first missionary trip, they went through each of the churches a second time appointing elders and encouraging the young congregations. Once back in Antioch, Paul confronted some Jewish believers who saw Judaism as a necessary ingredient for any who would follow Jesus. Paul confronted the problem in Antioch. Then, as Paul heard of a similar problem affecting the Galatian churches, he wrote them on the issue. Paul emphasized that faith in Jesus is the object, not compliance with the Jewish law.

This Judaic issue was prevalent in the church, rearing its head not only in Antioch and Galatia, but also finding root in Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to ferret out the problem and seek the support and a solution framed by the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem church.

In Jerusalem, after much debate, Peter gave a speech in full alignment with Paul’s teaching and experience. The elders and apostles recognized that they reached the conclusions by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They wrote a letter and gave it to

Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas¹. The letter set out the principles that churches should follow in order to maintain the integrity of fellowship while not bending to the rigid legal requirements of Judaism as a substitute for the Christian faith.

It is here, in Acts 15, we pick up our story of Paul's second missionary journey. The second missionary journey is exciting, filled with adventure, mighty works of God, courage, persecution, joy, tears, and the greater establishment and advance of the kingdom of God! So, we begin this journey with Paul's return to Antioch after the conference in Jerusalem.

PAUL'S RETURN TO ANTIOCH

Luke tells us that for some unspecified time, "Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also" (Acts 15:35). It does not take great imagination to think of Paul seeing daily the presence of "many others" teaching in Antioch and wondering whether Antioch was where he was most needed and most useful. Paul also must have wondered how the churches he and Barnabas had started were doing. How had they received Paul's letter we call Galatians? Did the churches understand Paul's reasoning and positions? Were they following his counsel and instructions? Were the false teachers set right?

Luke does not give us those inward thoughts of Paul, but they can fairly be assumed as we read right after the statement that "many others" were also teaching in Antioch that, "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'" (Acts 15:36).

Barnabas was all for the trip, but there was a sticking point. Barnabas wanted to take his cousin John Mark again. Paul was against it. Paul did not want to take Mark after Mark had prematurely abandoned the last mission effort, leaving in Pamphylia. Luke says, "there arose a sharp disagreement" (Acts 15:39). Luke does not pull any punches in his writing. The word he uses for "sharp disagreement" we find in other passages like Deuteronomy 29:28 and Jeremiah

¹ This is the first, but not the only time, we hear of Silas. The name "Silas" is likely a Hebrew (Semitic) name [F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Eerdmans 1951) at 301]. We know that Silas, like Paul, was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). Silas travels with Paul who will write of him using Silas's Roman name, Silvanus (1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:19). (Although many translations translate Silvanus in those passages as Silas.)

32:37.² In those passages we read, “the Lord uprooted them from their land in anger and fury and great wrath” and “Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation.” This was not a mild difference in opinion. These two godly men truly struggled with each other trying to determine what was right for them to do before God.

The net result of the disagreement was the separation of Paul and Barnabas. We should remember here that initially Paul wanted the two to go out together. It was Paul’s suggestion, “Let *us* return and visit the brothers in every city.” Instead of the two going together, Barnabas took John Mark and returned to the first churches started on the first missionary trip, those on the island Cyprus. (This made sense because Cyprus was Barnabas’s home and was also the one part of the first mission trip where Mark was present.) Paul took Silas and went back to Galatia and Phrygia.

From here, the Acts history follows Paul. Barnabas is not mentioned again in the New Testament beyond a reference by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:6 about Barnabas and Paul both having to work for a living.

There is a writing called *The Acts of Barnabas*, which claims to be John Mark’s account of the activities and death of Barnabas on Cyprus. The writing, however, is quite late. Some scholars date it in the 400’s to 500’s.³

Paul sets out on this trip taking Silas as his partner. This time when Paul went to the Southern Galatian churches, he did so by the land route rather than by sea.

² Luke uses *parazusmos* (παράζυσμος) translated “sharp disagreement. The Old Testament passages cited are from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the “Septuagint.” This is the Old Testament version used most often by Paul. It gives a good sense of how the Greek word was used in his circles.

³ J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford 1993) at 523.



Luke tells us that Paul and Silas used the trip as an opportunity to strengthen the churches in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41).

Silas made a wonderful choice as a traveling companion for Paul.⁴ The Jerusalem church had previously used Silas as a voice for their opinions (Acts 15:22ff) and so he was in a position to speak of (if not for) the Jerusalem church. Because Paul was taking the Jerusalem decree with him, Silas also was another voice to explain the decree. From the notes Paul adds in later letters (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:19) Silas was obviously a good co-worker and probably either a coauthor or a secretary of at least two of Paul's letters. Silas also (just like Paul) was a Roman citizen. This would come in handy in the traveling as well.

Paul then went through Derbe and into Lystra. In Lystra, Paul came upon a young man whose mother and grandmother was Jewish, but whose father was a Greek. The church in Lystra spoke highly of this young man, not only in Lystra but also in nearby Iconium. Paul decided to bring the young man on the journey, and so we find Timothy making his first appearance in the New Testament.⁵

⁴ These points are made, albeit a bit differently, by Ben Witherington III in *The Acts of the Apostles – A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Eerdmans 1998) at 473.

⁵ Acts is not too clear on when or how Timothy was converted. Witherington believes that Luke implies that Timothy was converted “through the previous efforts of Paul and Barnabas in

Paul chose to have Timothy circumcised before they ventured out together. One might fairly ask why Paul, who had written such a clear letter to the Galatian churches about NOT circumcising Greek Christians in order to comply with the law, would have Timothy circumcised? The answer likely lies in Timothy's heritage. Timothy's father was Greek, but his mother ("Eunice"—2 Tim. 1:5) and her mother ("Lois," Timothy's grandmother—2 Tim. 1:5) were Jews. Under Jewish law and custom, one's Jewish heritage was passed on through the mother, not the father!⁶ Because Timothy was Jewish through his maternal side, he was deemed by Jews (including Paul) to be Jewish.

Paul never had a problem with Jews following their laws and customs. Paul himself followed a number of Jewish traditions. Paul still considered himself a Jew and a Pharisee even after accepting Jesus as his Lord and risen Savior. (See, e.g. Acts 23:6). For Paul, who would be going into synagogues on the trip teaching the Jews about their Deliverer, it seemed best to have Timothy the Jew circumcised. Luke noted Paul circumcised Timothy, "because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek" (Acts 16:3). Timothy would be a visible testimony whether Paul was teaching that the Christian faith was a fulfillment of Judaism or simply a way out of it. Paul wanted there to be no doubt.

Bruce writes, "Paul therefore recognized his status (and, in Jewish eyes, legitimized him) by circumcising him."⁷

As Paul and Silas continued through these young churches, Paul took with him and delivered to them the decisions about binding Jewish law on the Greeks "reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem" (Acts 16:4). This was the letter that, under the timing we set out in lesson 13, would have come about *after* Paul had written Galatians to these churches. One would suspect that Paul took delight in the confirmation that the Jerusalem decision gave to Paul's instructions and guidance written in our Galatian letter.

Lystra." Ibid. at 474. Some argue support for this in Paul's characterization of Timothy as his "beloved and faithful child in the Lord" in 1 Cor. 4:17.

⁶ For a good discussion on the matrilineal Jewish heritage laws, see "Who is a Jew?" at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/whojew1.html>. See also Witherington at 475.

⁷ Bruce, *ibid.* at 308.

Luke tells us that Paul went through Phrygia and Galatia, but was “forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia” (Acts 16:6). For that reason, when Paul and his crew came to Mysia, their attempts to go into Bithynia were stopped by the Holy Spirit. We are not told *how* the Holy Spirit closed that door, but we are told it happened! Instead, Paul, Silas, and Timothy went over to Troas!

Guess whom Paul found in Troas? Luke! Our author of Acts was there and joined the mission effort. Luke goes into no detail, but simply changes how he writes the events. For the first time in Acts, Luke begins speaking of what “we” did, instead of what “Paul” did or what “they” did. The transition verse is Acts 16:8-10:

So, passing by Mysia, *they* went down to Troas. 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 God had called *us* to preach the gospel to them.

With his involvement, Luke keeps a good accurate narrative of the journey. Suddenly, instead of writing about what was done in generic terms (“after some days” or “he went through...” or “they went on their way”), Luke writes with great precision! “Setting sail from Troas, *we* made a *direct voyage to Samothrace*, and *the following day to Neapolis* and from there to Philippi” (Acts 16:11-12).⁸

In Philippi, Paul and the team did not go to a synagogue. Rather, we find them in the city for some days. On the Sabbath, they “went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer” (Acts 16:13). Scholars believe that there must not have been enough males to constitute the quorum needed for an official synagogue. We read in the Mishnah that 10 males were needed. It makes additional sense when we see Luke adding that at “the place of prayer” (as opposed to a synagogue) were “women who had come together” (Acts 16:13).

The women were receptive! One, a wealthy merchant named Lydia, asked the missionary team to return to her home. Why? Because, Luke says, “the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul” (Acts 16:14). Lydia

⁸ Scholars note that Samothrace was a full day’s sail from Troas. Neapolis was yet another day’s sail.

and her household were baptized at that time. She then had Paul and crew come stay at her home as guests.

While Paul and crew were in Philippi, they reached a point where a slave girl who had a spirit of divination⁹ started following them daily crying out, “these men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17). After it continued on for a number of days, Paul put a stop to it. While walking to the “place of prayer,” Paul finally had had enough. As Luke saw it, “Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the Spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her’” (Acts 16:18).

The spirit indeed left the girl, much to the chagrin of her owners. The slave girl had been making her owners a good bit of money off her divining. When the owners saw “that their hope¹⁰ of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers” (Acts 16:19). It is worth noting that the people would have seen Luke and Timothy as Greeks. These two were left alone and just Paul and Silas the Jews were arrested.

The owners managed to incite the town magistrates and the crowd against Paul and Silas. The men were stripped and beaten. Their feet were shackled into a torture instrument that forced the legs far apart¹¹ and they were thrown into prison.

⁹ Her possession in the Greek is noted by the word *pythona* (πύθωνα). We get the word “python” from it. Bruce calls the slave girl a “Pythoness” noting that these possessed diviners were deemed to be “inspired by Apollo, the Pythian god, who was embodied in a snake (the python) as Delphi (also called Pytho).

¹⁰ This is a hallmark verse in the New Testament worth marking in your Bibles. It is a clear example of the true meaning of the Greek word *elpis* (ἐλπίς) translated as “hope.” The owners had a moneymaking machine in the girl. She had made them money before and was thoroughly expected to make them money in the future. Now, the future money was not made yet, but it was confidently expected – business as usual! It was this confident expectation that was taken away. That is the thrust of meaning in the Greek word *elpis*, confident expectation. Too often in English, we use “hope” to mean a long shot or a desire that might possibly come about, but not likely! So, when we read of our “hope” in God (1 Tim. 6:17), the “hope” to which we are called (Eph. 1:18), or Christ in us, the “hope” of glory (Col. 1:21), we think of something speculative, but wished for. We should understand that these are not pie in the sky wishes, but confident expectations!

¹¹ The translators use the English “stocks” for the torture device. The device (a *zulon* (ζύλον) had multiple holes to force the legs wide in a torture position. Bruce at 318.

Paul and Silas reacted by singing hymns and praying to God in the depth of their cell well into the night. Around midnight, an earthquake gave Paula and Silas release and freedom. But instead of taking flight, Paul and Silas remained in their cells!

The jailer awoke and saw that the prison doors were open. Fearing the prisoners had escaped, the jailer decided to kill himself (for his life would be forfeit had the prisoners escaped under his watch). As the jailer pulled his sword, Paul called out to him loudly, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here” (Acts 16:28). The jailer was no doubt stunned. He called for lights, ran in before Paul and Silas, and fell trembling with fear. The jailer brought them out and asked them the most important question in his entire life, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

This jailer would certainly have been hearing the prayers and praises Paul and Silas proclaimed while in the cell. Paul and Silas had something that enabled them to stay in a prison hole, when most anyone else would have disregarded the consequences to the jailer and fled when the opportunity presented itself.

Paul and Silas answered the jailer’s question, instructing him, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). Luke then tells of Paul and Silas telling the jailer and his house “the word of the Lord.” Then we have a beautiful contrast of the usage of water! The jailer took Paul and Silas out “the same hour of the night” and washed their wounds. The water was used to wash the jailer and his household.¹² “He was baptized at once, he and all his family.” Through the centuries the joy of that moment is not lost. Each word of Luke brings the smile and happiness current over that incredible night in Philippi!

The jailer brought Paul and Silas into his house and set food before them. “And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God” (Acts 16:34). What a story Luke must have heard upon awakening the next morning! The town went to sleep with Paul and Silas in chains under the jailer’s watchful eye. The dawn came with Paul and Silas in the jailer’s home fed, washed, and celebrating the Christian birth of the jailer and his family! Wow!

¹² John Chrysostom (347-407), who we studied in Church History (see lessons at [www. Biblical-Literacy.com](http://www.Biblical-Literacy.com)), comments on this passage saying, “Do you mark what happened? There a girl was released from a spirit, and they cast them into a prison...Here, they...show the doors standing open, and it opened the doors of his heart, it loosed two sorts of chains...And he took them...and washed their stripes, washed them and was washed: those he washed from their stripes, himself was washed from his sins: he fed and was fed” (homilies 36:2).

We are not surprised that later when Paul, again imprisoned in another city, writes the church at Philippi and begins by saying, “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy” (Phil. 1:3).

The next day, the magistrates ordered that Paul and Silas be let go! Paul, however, was not leaving so easily! Paul wanted the actual people responsible for beating and imprisoning Paul and Silas without a trial to come confront them face-to-face. For at this time, Paul let the authorities know that he and Silas were Roman citizens. Of course, this made the beatings and imprisonment illegal. The authorities were mortified! They came to Paul and Silas with great apologies on their lips. After receiving the apologies, Paul and Silas willingly left Philippi (but not without first going back to see Lydia and the other Christians and encouraging them).

POINTS FOR HOME

1. Christians can have sharp disagreements, even over key matters before God. Yet, that should never stop Christians from love and the service of the Lord. Paul and Barnabas, long time friends and close brothers, had such a sharp disagreement. From that disagreement came the dual efforts to the mission field. Luke gives us no reason to think the fellowship of the two was ever severed. In fact, we ultimately see Mark, the source of that conflict, coming back into Paul’s life as a faithful friend. Paul will later ask Timothy (yes, the same Timothy that Paul brought along from Lystra on the second journey) to get Mark and bring him “for he is very useful to me for ministry” (1 Tim. 4:6).
2. We might also add a brief point on having mercy on the young! Maturity does count for something and young people often make mistakes which they will outgrow.
3. There is great joy when God comes into the life of a lost soul. The joy grows even greater when a family comes to faith! “Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!... or there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forever more” (Ps 133). Paul was kept out of Asia, but God put others there! Let us pray that God will open doors with the people of that region to develop relationships with those serving there to have the opportunity to share their faith with them.

4. Darkness and chains are no match for God! We worship a God who brings people “out of darkness and the deepest gloom,” who breaks “away their chains” (Ps. 107:14). We worship a God who turns “mourning into gladness” (Jer. 31:13). As Paul would later write to these same Philippians, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4).

NEXT WEEK: Read Bruce pages 223-247!