



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 16

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Introduction

Chapter Outline:

- Timothy Joins St. Paul and Silas (1-5)
- The Macedonia Call (6-10)
- Conversions at Philippi (11-40)

Timothy Joins St. Paul and Silas (16:1-5)



- The apostles Paul and Silas travel to Derbe and Lystra, where they meet Timothy
- Well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium
- St. Paul himself does not receive Timothy into the ministry without sufficient testimony, and permission of the brethren
- Timothy is a Greek name and means one who fears God
- Following his father, he was uncircumcised and, hence, regarded as a Greek instead of a Jew
- Yet he had been taught the Scriptures from childhood (2 Tim 3:15) by his pious mother and grandmother (2 Tim 1:5)
- These, Eunice and Lois by name, were Christians also
- St. Paul converted him (1 Cor 4:17), Compare Gal 4:19

Timothy Joins St. Paul and Silas (16:1-5)



- St. Paul wants Timothy to join him
- St. Paul has Timothy circumcised not because he thought it necessary to salvation, but because of the Jews to avoid their opposition and reproaches
- Traveling with the apostles Paul and Silas, they deliver the decrees on circumcision and the law of Moses decided upon at Jerusalem (Acts 15:23-29)
- The churches are strengthened, increasing in number daily

The Macedonian Call (16:6-10)



- Passing through Phrygia and Galatia, the Spirit forbids them from preaching in Asia
- Phrygia was the largest province of Asia Minor
- It had Bithynia north; Pisidia and Lycia south; Galatia and Cappadocia east; and Lydia and Mysia west
- Nearing Mysia, they try to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit does not permit them
- God appoints certain and determinate times to open and set forth his truth, so that both the election and the calling may proceed of grace

The Macedonian Call (16:6-10)



- He does not show why they were forbidden, but only that they were forbidden, teaching us to obey and not to enquire
- Bypassing Mysia, they arrive in Troas
- Troas was a city of Phrygia or Mysia, on the Hellespont, between Troy north, and Assos south
- Sometimes the name Troas or Troad, is used to denote the whole country of the Trojans
- This city was a transit harbor for those who crossed from Asia to Macedonia, or Greece

The Macedonian Call (16:6-10)



- St. Paul has a vision of a Macedonian man asking for help
- Like St. Peter's vision at Joppa, it was a revelation
- Like St. Peter's, it called him to labor in fields before unentered
- Macedonia proper lies to the north of the Aegean Sea, within a few hours sail of Troas
- St. Paul and his companions conclude God wants them to go to Macedonia
- The use of "we" indicates St. Luke, the author, has now joined them
- It is supposed that St. Luke joined the missionary band at Troas

Lydia Baptized at Philippi (16:11-15)



- From Troas, by way of Samothrace and Neapolis, St. Paul's company arrive at Philippi of Macedonia, a Roman colony
- Samothracia is an island about halfway between Troas and Neapolis, the European port where they landed
- Philippi is only a few miles distant
- They sought it at once, because it was the chief city of that part of Macedonia
- On the Sabbath, they meet with women gathered by the river to pray and St. Paul speaks
- There seems to have been no synagogue, but a few pious Jews, women at least in great part, met on the river banks, out of the city, for prayer

Lydia Baptized at Philippi (16:11-15)



- Lydia is a Greek name
- She was probably a convert to Judaism
- Thyatirawas beyond the Aegean Sea, hundreds of miles away
- It was on the borders of Lydia, which was famous for its purple cloths
- She was at this distant place for purposes of trade
- Thyatira was a Macedonian colony, and Lydia probably had acquaintances or kinsmen in Macedonia itself
- As she was a sincere worshipper of God, she was prepared to receive the heavenly truths spoken by St. Paul and his companions

Lydia Baptized at Philippi (16:11-15)



- She believed them and received them as the doctrines of God; and in this faith she was joined by her whole family, and in it they were all baptized, apparently without any delay
- She urged them
- This was an instance of great hospitality, and also an evidence of her desire for further instruction in the doctrines of religion

St. Paul and St. Silas Imprisoned (16:16-24)



- On the way to prayer, St. Paul's and his companions are followed by a slave girl who was possessed with a spirit of divination and had brought her masters much profit through fortune telling
- “a spirit of divination” Literally means the spirit of a Pythoness
- This meant, among the Greeks, a prophetic spirit, Pythias being one of the names of Apollo, the god of prophecy
- She proclaims St. Paul's company to be servants of God, proclaiming the way of salvation

St. Paul and St. Silas Imprisoned (16:16-24)



- For similar testimony of the evil spirits to the work and power of Christ, see Mk 3:12; Lk 4:34
- The Lord silenced them, and St. Paul followed the example
- This she does for many days
- St. Paul being grieved for the poor victim; grieved to see such power possessed by the enemy of man's salvation, and grieved to observe the malignant design with which this high testimony was borne to Christ
- He therefore casts out the spirit in the name of Jesus
- This is an instance of that power which Christ gave to his apostles to cast out devils in his name, (Mk 16:17)

St. Paul and St. Silas Imprisoned (16:16-24)



- Instead of regarding the act as proof of divine power, her masters were intent only on their profits
- They seize the apostles Paul and Silas, as the leaders of the missionary group and drag them before the magistrates
- Where they are accused as troublemakers, teaching unlawful customs and destroying the public peace, and endangering the public safety
- A great prejudice against Jews at this time existed in Europe
- Near this time, Claudius Caesar expelled all Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2)

St. Paul and St. Silas Imprisoned (16:16-24)



- There was a general outcry against them inflamed with prejudice; and the magistrates tore off their clothes, and delivered them to the mob, commanding the lictors, or beadles, to beat them with rods
- This was the Roman custom of treating criminals
- The Jews were by law prohibited from inflicting more than 40 stripes, and usually inflicted but 39, 2 Corinthians 11:24
- But there was no such law among the Romans

St. Paul and St. Silas Imprisoned (16:16-24)



- They were unrestricted in regard to the number of lashes, and probably inflicted many more
- Perhaps Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 11:23 "In stripes above measure, " that is, beyond the usual measure among the Jews, or beyond moderation
- The inner prison is a damp interior cell from which all light was excluded
- The stocks is an instrument of torture as well as confinement
- The feet, stretched wide apart, were thrust through holes in a wall of wood, and the prisoner was fastened there

The Philippian Jailer Saved (16:25-34)



- At midnight, St. Paul and St. Silas are praying and singing hymns, the prisoners listening
- They were happy in their sufferings
- They prayed, first, for grace to support them, and for pardon and salvation for their persecutors; and then, secondly, sang praises to God, who had called them to such a state of salvation, and had accounted them worthy to suffer shame for the testimony of Jesus
- And, although they were in the inner prison, they sang so loud and so heartily that the prisoners heard them
- There is a great earthquake, opening the doors and loosening the prisoners' chains

The Philippian Jailer Saved (16:25-34)



- The jailer comes in, assumes all have escaped, prepares to kill himself
- He was responsible with his life for the safety of his prisoners
- Imagining them gone, he determined, like a Roman, to anticipate disgrace by death
- Self-murder was very common among the Romans
- It was now dark, being midnight, St. Paul must have had a Divine intimation of what the jailor was going to do; and, to prevent it, cried out aloud, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here"

The Philippian Jailer Saved (16:25-34)



- The jailer asks for a light that he might see how things stood, and whether the words of St. Paul were true; for on this his personal safety depended
- He was terrified by the earthquake, and feeling the danger to which his own life was exposed
- He falls before the apostles Paul and Silas not in a way of religious adoration, for they would never have admitted that; but in token of civil respect unto them, and of his great veneration for them, as was the manner of the eastern people
- And asks what he must do to be saved, it is not likely that the jailor referred here to his personal safety

The Philippian Jailer Saved (16:25-34)



- They first tell him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ which they preach, and let his household also receive it, and he shall be all placed in the sure way to final salvation

The Philippian Jailer Saved (16:25-34)



- They then speak the word of the Lord to him and his household
- By teaching him and all that were in his house the doctrine of the Lord, they plainly pointed out to them the way of salvation
- That same hour he washes their stripes, then he and his household are baptized without delay
- He then takes St. Paul and St. Silas to his house, feeds them, and rejoices that he and his household has believed in God
- Genuine faith in Christ will always be accompanied with benevolence and humanity, and every fruit that such dispositions can produce

St. Paul Refuses to Depart Secretly (16:35-40)



- The next day the magistrates send officers to release St. Paul and St. Silas
- It is possible that the magistrates had, in some way, heard that the apostles Paul and Silas were Roman citizens
- They wished, therefore, to quietly get rid of them
- They had broken the law
- When the jailer tells St. Paul he is free to go
- St. Paul demands that the magistrates come personally, as they have beaten Roman citizens without a trial

St. Paul Refuses to Depart Secretly (16:35-40)



- St. Paul was born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25)
- His father, or some remoter ancestor, had been admitted to Roman citizenship, a great privilege and honor
- They had been publicly scourged and tortured as evil doers, in violation of law
- St. Paul insisted that they should be as publicly vindicated, not for their own honor, but for the sake of the church at Philippi

St. Paul Refuses to Depart Secretly (16:35-40)



- They feared, because the Roman law was so constituted that an insult offered to a citizen was deemed an insult to the whole Roman people
- The wicked are not moved with the fear of God, but with the fear of men
- Had St. Paul insisted, the magistrates could have been severely punished
- They humbled themselves, and came, and besought them, and desired them to depart out of that city
- Returning to Lydia's house, St. Paul and St. Silas encourage the brethren, then leave Philippi
- The church thus planted grew and was afterwards honored with an apostolic letter



Conclusion

- What do we know about Timothy?
- Why did St. Paul have Timothy circumcised?
- The decrees that the early Christians were to keep were determined by whom?
- What led St. Paul to believe that the Lord was calling him to preach in Macedonia?
- Who are the “we” mentioned in v. 10?



Conclusion

- Who was Lydia? How does she figure into the events at Philippi?
- Does "fortune telling" please God?
- How did St. Paul deal with "fortune telling girl"?
- Why were the magistrates so ready to punish them? What was their punishment?
- How did St. Paul and St. Silas behave in the jail?