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Acts 15:36 - 16:24



Acts - Steve Gregg

In Acts 15:36 - 16:24, Steve Gregg explains how God guides individuals in different ways, including through dreams, scriptures, prophecies, and the Holy Spirit. Using examples from the Bible, Steve highlights how Paul received guidance through a dream to go to Macedonia, where he established the first church in Philippi. Despite facing persecution and prison time, Paul's faith led to the conversion and baptism of the jailer and his household. Steve also discusses the significance of the Jerusalem Council's decree that Gentiles do not need to follow Jewish laws and legal requirements, and the role of Roman citizenship in Paul and Silas' travels.

Transcript

In Acts chapter 15, we saw the chapter is mostly dominated by the discussion of the Jerusalem Council, where it was decided by the gathered apostles and elders of the church that Gentiles would not be required to come under the Torah and the requirement of circumcision and the whole Jewish law. This was something that some people were saying was necessary, especially as Luke tells us, some of the Pharisees who had become believers were insisting that Christian Gentiles should become Jews in order to be true Christians. They should come under the law that distinguished Jews from Gentiles, and that was the circumcision and the other ritual law of the Torah.

Paul and Barnabas never agreed with that, and there was great contention over it, and the apostles and elders got together and discussed that in Jerusalem at what we call the Jerusalem Council. This is in Acts 15. This is what most of the chapter is about.

However, we reached the end of the chapter, the ruling of the council was favorable toward Paul and Barnabas' position and therefore favorable toward the Gentiles because now they would not have to be circumcised or be burdened with that yoke, as they referred to it, of the law. And that being done, that brings us to about chapter 15, verse 36. We read in verse 35 that Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch after that council for quite some time, and they were preaching and teaching there, and then the time came when Paul got the urge to revisit the churches that they had planted in their first missionary journey.

And I can very much relate with this. If I had converts, if I had children, spiritual offspring in another country whom I had birthed and left abruptly without a great deal of nurture, I would want to go back and see how they're doing. And by this time, we don't know how much time he'd been away.

We don't know the gap between the end of his first missionary journey and this point we're at, but Paul is feeling it's time to go back and check on those brethren again. So he suggested to Barnabas in verse 36, then after some days, Paul said to Barnabas, let us go now back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing. Now, Barnabas was determined to take with them John Mark, but Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the word.

And the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. And 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. Now, Barnabas agreed that this would be a good time to go back and visit the churches, but Paul and Barnabas could not agree about the composition of the team that should go. John Mark had accompanied them at the beginning of the first missionary journey and had been with them on the island of Cyprus when Sergius Paulus had been converted.

But when they'd reached the mainland of Asia Minor, for reasons that are not mentioned in the scripture, John Mark decided to leave the team and go back to Antioch where they had originated. Paul obviously had a negative view of John Mark having done so. We're not told by Luke when he tells us about John Mark going, this of course is back in chapter 13 and verse 13, John Mark departed from them.

Luke does not tell us why, and nor does Luke editorialize or suggest that there's anything bad or good or there's a right decision or wrong decision. He just mentions it. Matter of fact, John Mark went home.

But now we read that Paul had thought that was not a very good thing for Mark to do. You know, you ought to stick it out. And it may well be that he felt that John Mark just wasn't the right stuff.

Now, maybe John Mark was not the right stuff on the first missionary journey, but Barnabas thought he should be given another chance. He thought that, you know, maybe Mark didn't know what he was bargaining for when he left on the first journey and he found he wasn't ready for it. But now, knowing very well what's involved in the rigors of such a journey, he's willing to try it again.

And Barnabas says, well, I think I'll, I think we should trust him. And Paul says, no, no,

he, you know, he deserted us before and I don't want to take a chance with him again. Now, we know from Colossians 4 and verse 10 that Barnabas and Mark were cousins and many feel that it was this relationship that caused Barnabas to be favorable toward Mark and to want to give him another chance where Paul, who had no such nepotism in him toward Mark, just thought that's too risky to take him along.

Now, it's also possible that even if Mark had not been related to Barnabas, that Barnabas would have been so disposed as to bring Mark along because we know that Barnabas was a conciliatory person. He's the one who had actually allowed Paul to become favorably acquainted with the other apostles when they were afraid to meet him. Barnabas is the one who had taken Paul after his conversion and introduced him to the reluctant apostles.

And he's a peacemaking kind of a guy. And we can see that, you know, Luke himself is referring to Barnabas as a good man who was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. And very possibly whether Mark had been a relative or not, Barnabas was the type of guy who'd say, well, let's give the boy another chance.

Now, we're not really clear on what Mark was needed for. When they went on their first missionary journey, it says that they had John Mark as their assistant. That's in chapter 13, verse 5. In what ways he assisted, we don't know.

He might have been, he might have assisted in preaching. He might have assisted in counseling, you know, inquirers or new converts. He might have assisted in baptizing people, or he might've just carried their bag.

He might've just been doing practical assistance. We don't have any idea what his duties were, but he had abandoned them is the point that Paul's making. And he doesn't want someone who's failed the test the first time to go again because, I mean, once you're out there, it's risky.

You can't just, there's a lot of dangers out there as Paul and Barnabas both knew. Persecution, bandits on the road. There's all kinds of bad weather.

You could die from the weather. There's, there's hardships, and you don't want somebody along who has already shown that he doesn't do well with hardships. So, Paul and Barnabas could not agree about this, and the contention became very strong between them.

Now, this doesn't mean they got angry or hated each other, but they just were butting heads about this one issue. Then their contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. They, they actually started two missionary teams.

Barnabas took Mark with him, and they went to Cyprus, which is, of course, where they went on the first missionary journey. Also, the first stop was Cyprus, and that was where

Barnabas and possibly Mark also had relatives. Barnabas was from Cyprus.

Mark probably also. So, they went back there, and probably they connected with Sergius Paulus, their convert from the first trip, and who knows what other fruitful things they did. Sometimes people say, well, this contention between Paul and Barnabas, we need to take sides.

One of these guys was obviously right, and one was wrong, and our tendency might be to take sides with Paul only because we follow his ministry from this point on, and sometimes people who do this, they say, well, Barnabas was clearly wrong because he takes off with Mark. We never hear from him again. The fact that we never hear from him again means he must have been mistaken.

Well, that's, that's not reasonable. The reason we have the story of Paul is because the author of the book traveled with Paul much of the time, beginning with this second missionary journey. Luke joined him, and so we happen to have Paul traveling with a historian and a physician who is keeping track of Paul's activity and recording them.

So, we have this team, Paul's team, some detail is recorded of their activities and the fruitfulness. If Barnabas had Mark writing his story, we might have another book of Acts, which includes the Acts of Barnabas. We have no reason to doubt that Barnabas was fruitful also in his ministry, and Mark himself later on too.

Even Paul spoke well of Mark later on. Mark proved himself to be a decent guy, which seems to vindicate Barnabas. Barnabas felt like, I think we should give him another chance.

Well, even Paul later on spoke of Mark. He even had Mark with him in Colossae, in Colossians 4.10, which I mentioned. Mark is with Paul in the place where Paul is in prison and sending the letter to Colossae.

And later on still in 2 Timothy, Paul's final epistle in 2 Timothy 4.11, Paul refers to Timothy as profitable or useful. In 2 Timothy 4.11, Paul says, only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

So, Paul at this point, at the end of his life, believes Mark is a useful assistant in ministry. Later, Mark was not traveling with Barnabas, but with Peter. In 1 Peter 5, verse 13, Peter writes to the churches and he sends greetings and he says, he sends greetings also from Mark, my son.

He's referring to this same Mark, John Mark, who was not his actual son, but more like his son like Timothy, was Paul's son. His son in the faith, his protegee, his disciple, the one he was training. Very strong early church tradition suggests that later, probably after Peter died, that Mark wrote the second gospel, the gospel of Mark, the second one in our collection, and that he wrote it from Peter's sermons.

That Mark was actually writing the gospel according to Peter. That Peter, we're told, Peter preached it in Aramaic and Mark actually translated for him into Greek. Also, early church tradition tells us that Mark went to Alexandria, Egypt, and founded the Church of Alexandria down there.

So, Mark was a guy who did have a future at this particular time. Paul could not foresee that future of Mark. Barnabas had more of a vision for the kid.

I think this guy will amount to something. And so, Barnabas may in fact be the one vindicated in his disagreement with Paul here. By the later activities, even Paul had to admit that Mark was a useful man, and Peter thought well of him, and we got one of our four gospels from him too.

So, even though Mark didn't do well in his first appearance in ministry, and Paul didn't trust him in the second time, I think we have to, in the final analysis, put our approval on Mark, as Barnabas himself did. Now, Paul chose another team then, since Barnabas was not going to go with him this time. He picked Silas.

Now, we had read back in verse 33 that Silas and a man named Judas who had been sent from Jerusalem, they were prophets for one thing, and they had come with Paul and Barnabas back from the Jerusalem council to Antioch in order to give confirmation that the letter that Barnabas and Paul were carrying, which vindicated their position, was approved by the church in Jerusalem. And they remained in Antioch for a while, and then it says in verse 33 that they went back to Jerusalem. So, Silas was now back in Jerusalem.

But Paul takes him, it says in verse 40, Paul chose Silas and departed, and so Silas became part of his team now, but he's gone back to Jerusalem. Well, we do have verse 34, which says, however, it seemed good that Silas should remain there. However, the oldest manuscripts do not have that verse.

It is believed that some scribe inserted verse 34 in order to harmonize verse 33 with verse 40. That is to say, since Paul grabbed Silas and takes him with him, it sounds like Silas is still in Antioch. And yet verse 33 said that Silas and Judas went back to Jerusalem.

So, in order to harmonize that, somebody apparently stuck in verse 34 and said, but Silas stayed behind. That is not in the oldest manuscripts and therefore not thought to be an authentic statement. Therefore, it would appear that Silas had in fact gone back to Jerusalem in verse 33, but he either came back to visit Antioch and Paul said, hey, let's go on this trip together, or else Paul may have sent for him from Jerusalem.

Paul might have said, this Silas we traveled with from Jerusalem to Antioch, I like him. He's got a lot of credibility. And Silas also had something else going for him.

Both he and Paul were Roman citizens. Most Jews were not, and traveling in the Gentile

world, Roman citizenship could turn out to be, let's just say a handy thing to have, and it twice did become very useful to Paul and Silas. And Silas and Paul, both for whatever reasons, had Roman citizenship.

Now, Roman citizenship was granted on the basis either of merit or money. A person who had done great things for the emperor or had done great exploits in battle in the Roman army might be granted the privilege of Roman citizenship. If someone had didn't have those qualifications, they could buy it for a lot of money.

It costs a lot of money. You could become a Roman citizen. Well, what were the privileges of being a Roman citizen? For one thing, you could not be crucified.

If you happen to do a capital crime and had to be put to death, you would not be crucified, you'd be beheaded. You might say, well, is that a great privilege? If you know what crucifixion is like, you know it is. We think of when ISIS cuts people's head off that that's a horrible, horrible thing, and it is.

It is a horrible, it's a horrible injustice. It's a horrible crime, but it's not as bad a way to go as crucifixion. And Romans usually crucified criminals, but if a person was a Roman citizen, they were exempt from that horrible, torturous death, and they could be dispatched more quickly.

Even prior to being executed, a Roman citizen would have the right to appeal to Caesar for his case. Other people just had to be judged and punished by the local authorities. But just as in the United States, a person theoretically can appeal his case all the way to the Supreme Court if he doesn't like the earlier court's decisions.

And frankly, that is more theoretical than real, because just try appealing your case to the Supreme Court sometime. I mean, the Supreme Court decides which cases they'll take and which ones they won't. They can't take them all.

But in the Constitution, we are granted the right to not only settle for the decisions of lower courts, we can appeal to higher courts, and ultimately the Supreme Court. A Roman citizen could do so also, where most people living in the Roman Empire could not. And you could go to the highest court if you didn't like the judgments of the lower courts.

That's a Roman citizen's privilege. Another privilege was a Roman citizen, if arrested, could not be interrogated by beating. Now, interrogation by beating might seem like a very barbarous thing.

You arrest somebody, you're not sure if they're guilty, so you beat it out of them, you know. But that's what Romans did. If they suspected you were guilty and you're not confessing, they beat you until you confess.

Now, a Roman citizen was exempt from that kind of interrogation. They could not be

beaten or bound until they had already been found guilty of a crime. They got a trial first, and only after they were condemned could they be beaten or punished.

So these are some privileges, all of which Paul benefited from. And Silas was also a Roman citizen. And Silas also had connections to the Jewish community in Jerusalem.

He had connections to the Jerusalem church, which means that traveling with Paul, Silas would have advantages of connections to the Jerusalem church in case Judaizers came along. Silas was, you know, a friend of the apostles in Jerusalem, and he had Roman citizenship. So he was making, in the natural sense, a very good companion, and he proved to be spiritually so too.

He was also a prophet. And there's times when the Holy Spirit directed their team to do this or not to do that, and it may well be that Silas was the one who prophetically received those words from the Holy Spirit. We don't know.

But Saul, or Paul as he was now being called, he felt Silas was a good choice, and it seems like it was a well-chosen one. And so it says in verse 40, 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.

Now, when he and Barnabas had gone on the first missionary journey, they'd taken ship to Cyprus, and then they'd sailed to Asia Minor. But since Barnabas and Mark had gone off to Cyprus, Paul doesn't have to follow them. Instead, he travels by land.

He doesn't get on a ship, and he travels by land up into Asia Minor to the region of Galatia where he had made his original converse. They would have to travel through very mountainous areas. There's apparently a very majestic pass called the Cilician Gates, through the mountains there that they passed through.

And they went, actually, instead of making the curve they'd made on the first missionary journey, where they'd go to the city of Antioch, and then to Iconium, and then to Lystra, and then to Derbe. They actually came to Derbe and Lystra and Iconium, the same cities in reverse order, because they are now coming from the east. They're coming over land from the east.

By the way, just for your information, Silas is the same person who in the epistles is sometimes referred to as Silvanus. Silvanus is the Latin form of his name. Silas is, I believe, the Greek form of his name.

Now, Paul and Silas are traveling, but they're going to add to their team. Chapter 16. Then he came to Derbe, that is Paul, should say they, but he, Paul came to Derbe and Lystra.

Again, these are cities that he had evangelized on the first journey. In fact, they were the

last two. Derbe was the last one and Lystra was the second to the last one.

And Lystra was the town where Paul had been stoned and dragged out of the city, you may recall, on his first missionary journey. But it was there, behold, a certain disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who believed, but his father was a Greek and apparently did not believe, a proud believer. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

And Paul wanted to have him go 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 a Greek. Now, recruiting Timothy on this occasion became sort of an important addition.

Timothy became one of Paul's most loyal and attached companions up until the day Paul died. He eventually, he could trust Timothy to oversee the churches in Ephesus, which is what Timothy was doing when Paul wrote to Timothy, both first and second Timothy. Timothy was a very young man.

Even years later, when he wrote to Timothy, he said, don't let people despise your youth. So Timothy must have been very young when he began to travel with Paul. And he was still young some decades later, young enough that older people would say, he's just a kid.

It is assumed Timothy may have been about 16, 17 years old at this point. His mother was Jewish. We know from second Timothy 1.5 that Timothy's mother's name was Eunice or Eunice, and that he had a grandmother named Lois.

Paul mentions these women in second Timothy 1.5 as Timothy's mother and grandmother. Their names are not given by Luke here, but Lois and Eunice, the grandmother and mother respectively of Timothy, were Jewish Christian believers. They must have been converted when Paul and Barnabas had come through on their first missionary journey.

They would have then witnessed also Paul being stoned and dragged out of the city. They were familiar with Paul and his activities. Timothy, no doubt, was also converted on that first missionary journey, though he might have been a preteen at the time.

Timothy had been raised in the scriptures. Paul tells us that in second Timothy chapter three, he tells Timothy that Timothy was, from childhood, trained in the holy scriptures. Now, of course, he may have been trained in the Jewish scriptures by his mother before he was even converted, before she was converted, but he would have been a fairly young child, probably pre-adolescent at the time his mother was converted.

So even from childhood, his mother would have taught him the scriptures, not only as a Jew, but from a Christian perspective. This, no doubt, is also one reason why Paul wanted Timothy to go along. Timothy was a bright and good boy.

He was well-reputed by all the saints in Lystra and Iconium. Now, as a young man, he'd already gotten a reputation in the local church and the church the next town over, Iconium. Even people in another town knew of Timothy and spoke highly of him.

And so he was sort of a, probably a young prodigy of the faith, trained in scripture from childhood, converted through Paul's ministry, almost certainly, on the first missionary journey. And though his dad was a Greek, now his dad might not have been living. I don't see how Paul could have taken a young man from his home just because he wanted him to go with him if his father was still living and had claims on him to take over the family business or something else, which would be customary.

Timothy may have been orphaned in terms of his father, but still his mother was living. Now, the Jews in the area knew that Timothy's dad was Greek, but they also knew that his mother was Jewish. That means that technically Timothy was Jewish.

To have a Jewish mother is basically what it means to be Jewish. Now, a Jew would much rather be able to have a Jewish mother and father, but if they have only one Jewish parent, it's the mother who gives you the Jewish identity. So Timothy was Jewish, but everyone knew his dad was Greek, and therefore there would be some question in people's minds, was he circumcised? As a Jewish boy, he should be, the Jews would think, certainly he must be, but his dad may not have agreed to it.

It was not known whether Timothy was circumcised or not by the general public, though they knew he was a Jew whose dad was a Greek, and since there would be some question about it, Paul went ahead and had him circumcised before traveling with him. Now, this is in order to avoid problems with the Jews. Paul was falsely accused, we find this very clearly in chapter 21, and maybe earlier, Paul was falsely accused of teaching Jews not to circumcise their children.

Now, Paul was against circumcising Gentiles, but he didn't care if the Jews circumcised their children or not. Paul never taught the Jews not to circumcise their children, though he was accused of teaching such a thing, and he must have been aware of that accusation, and Timothy was a Jew, and he knew that if someone said, well, this young Jewish man, do you have him circumcised? If Paul would say, well, actually he's not, this would have only fed the fires of rumor about Paul resisting Jewishness among the Jews, and so Paul just thought easier it would be if people who knew he had a Greek father and might therefore inquire, are you circumcised? If Timothy could say, yeah, I am. I mean, it's just simpler.

So, Paul went ahead and had him get circumcised. Now, contrast this with what Paul says about Titus in Galatians chapter 2. This is at an earlier time when Paul and Barnabas took the offering from the Antioch church to the Jerusalem church at the end of Acts 11. Paul tells about that visit, and apparently a Gentile convert named Titus had accompanied them from Antioch to Jerusalem, and there were some, this is before the

Jerusalem council, and so there were still some Pharisaic believers who believed that Titus should be circumcised, but Titus was a Gentile, and Paul would not hear of it at all.

It says in verse 3, Galatians 2.3, but not even Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage, to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. Now, Paul's saying, I was stubborn about this.

There were people who thought Titus should be circumcised. I did not yield to them for an hour. I wouldn't give them an inch, because the truth of the gospel would be compromised.

So, Paul was very strong about not circumcising Gentiles, because doing so would be his way of acquiescing to the idea that you're not really a Christian until you're a Jew. You have to cross a light to Judaism before you can really be a Christian. Now, Paul was so adamant against that, that was like the main battle Paul was fighting in his ministry, and he said, I wouldn't give in on that point.

But when it came to a Jewish boy like Timothy, he didn't have any problem with him being circumcised. In fact, it's more convenient. Remember Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 that to reach the Jews, when he is with them, he lives as a Jew.

To reach Gentiles, when he is with them, he lives like a Gentile. This I won't read, but you'll find it in 1 Corinthians 9, verses 19 through 22. And so, some people think Paul was inconsistent, that he wouldn't, he would not allow Titus to be circumcised, but he circumcised Timothy.

Different issue, different issues entirely. Titus was a Gentile. Paul would not compromise on the issue of Gentile circumcision.

Timothy was a Jew. Paul was not interested in offending the Jews unnecessarily by carrying along on his team a Jewish man who was not circumcised. That was just too, that was more controversy than he cared to have, and it was not his battle.

That was not his, he didn't want to die on that particular hill of Jewish circumcision, of Jews. And so, Timothy becomes part of the team, and it says in verse 4, and as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and the elders at Jerusalem. So, the letter that was written at the Jerusalem council, which is cited in, you know, at length for us in Acts 15, verses 23 through 29, where the apostles said that the Gentiles do not need to be circumcised or keep the Jewish law.

There were some concessions they wanted the Gentiles to make to avoid offending

Jewish people, but they did not require them to observe the law. That letter was being carried by Paul and Silas, and probably Barnabas and his team, including Mark and whoever else later joined Barnabas, they were probably carrying copies of that letter too, because it was Paul and Barnabas were assigned to that task, to take that to the Gentile churches, and so they were. So, the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily.

Now, when they had gone through Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, which is, of course, those were the regions that they evangelized on the first missionary journeys, they're now moving further west beyond that region that they'd evangelized previously, and they weren't sure exactly where to go. They were kind of up in the, by now, in Phrygia and Galatia, they were now kind of in the center or the, or toward the northwest portion of Asia Minor, and they could go north to Dithynia, or they could go south into Asia and go places like Ephesus and so forth, which Paul later would do, but at this point they didn't. They weren't sure which way to go.

They were kind of out west of where they'd evangelized previously, and they apparently were thinking about going down to Asia. That would have been a logical thing. It was on the same landmass, a very important political and religious center, and Ephesus could be evangelized, and yet it says they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in the word in Asia, so they didn't go that way.

So it says after that, when they'd come to Mycenae, which is a region up in the northwest of Asia Minor, when they'd come to that area, it says they tried to go into Dithynia, which is up to the north and the east, but the Spirit did not permit them. So they're kind of not sure which way to go. They think, well, should we go to Asia? No, the Holy Spirit says no.

Should we go up to Dithynia? No, the Holy Spirit says no. Now how did they know what the Holy Spirit was saying? Well, it's possible, like I said, Silas being a prophet may have received prophetic utterances from the Holy Spirit. That might be how they knew.

There may have been other ways. The Holy Spirit speaks more ways than one, and we're not given any specific information about how he spoke to them on this occasion. It's interesting in the second sense, when the Holy Spirit did not permit them to go into Dithynia, in the older manuscripts it says the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them.

If you have something other than the King James or the New King James, your Bible will say the Spirit of Jesus. That's the only time in the whole Bible that the Holy Spirit's called the Spirit of Jesus. There's several times the Holy Spirit's called the Spirit of Christ, but the expression the Spirit of Jesus is unique to this one passage.

It's just emphasizing the fact that they were being led by Jesus through his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who's guiding them, but the Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of Christ. When we say

Christ lives in me, we mean the Spirit of Christ resides in me.

And when the Spirit of God is leading, it's Jesus leading. And so Luke uses that expression here, though not in the manuscripts which were used by the King James and the New King James, which are somewhat later manuscripts. So passing by Mysia, they came to Troas.

Now this city is technically called Alexandria Troas. It's two words, Alexandria Troas. It's a Roman colony on the, it was a Roman colony, on the seacoast up to the north of the landmass of Asia Minor.

So they're now on the, they're at the edge of the continent there. And it says, 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. Interestingly, probably Silas may have gotten prophetic words, don't go to Asia, don't go to Macedonia. But he didn't get a prophetic word, go to Macedonia.

Instead, Paul had a dream about that. It's just interesting how that, you know, one time God lets him know his will this way, one time another way. A dream is one way, a prophecy is another way.

But I think very possibly what God is doing is teaching the apostles not to trust in any one form of guidance, but, but in God to provide guidance however he wishes. It's like when Jesus healed blind people, he healed lots of blind people, but never the same way twice. You know, he'd spit on the ground and make mud and put mud in the eye and tell him to wash it out and he'd come away seeing.

Other times he'd spit in the man's eyes. Other times he'd put his finger in the eyes. Other times he just told him, you know, to see or laid hands on him.

The same miracle done in lots of different ways. I think that what God often does is he avoids institutionalizing spiritual things. He doesn't want people to learn a method and say, okay, I know how to, I can handle this.

I know how to heal the blind because I saw Jesus do it and he did it the same way. I just do that too. But he didn't do it the same way.

So you have to say, I don't know what method he may want to use. I'll just have to trust him to do what he's going to do. And the same thing with guidance.

How does God guide? Well, however he wants to. He may guide you by you look at the scripture and a verse of scripture tells you directly what you need to know. Or he might

give a prophecy.

The spirit of Jesus might speak and say, don't go there. Or you might get a dream. Who knows? I mean, the important thing is that you're getting your guidance from God.

There's no way to predict how he's going to give it so that you don't become dependent on a certain way of hearing God. Then you're starting to look at that method rather than God himself as the means of your guidance. In any case, they were told to go over there.

Now it's interesting that we don't read that they preached in Troas. There's no evidence that they started a church in Troas on this occasion. They were there waiting for guidance and they got guidance to go take ship over to Macedonia, which is northern Greece.

And they would have to, of course, cross the Adriatic Sea to do that. I'm sorry, the Aegean Sea. The Adriatic Sea was between Italy and Greece, but between Asia Minor and Greece was the Aegean Sea.

And they'd have to cross that to get to Macedonia. But in Troas, I don't know why they didn't preach there at that time, but Paul later did on another occasion by himself without a team when he was looking for Titus to rejoin him after or Timothy rejoined him after he'd sent him to Corinth. He didn't come back.

Paul went to Troas to try to meet him halfway. And it says in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, and we don't have record of this in Acts, but in 2 Corinthians 2, 12, Paul says, furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit because he was still waiting to meet, I believe it was Timothy on that occasion. But the point here is he says he did go to Troas to preach the gospel, but this was a different occasion.

At this point, the first time he goes to Troas, he doesn't preach. He just is looking for guidance to where to go. And there he receives it.

A man from Macedonian dreams has come over to Macedonia and help us. So Paul shares that dream the next morning with his team. And they say, I think that's where God wants us to go.

And in verse 11, it says, therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace and the next day came to Neapolis. Now who did? We did. Suddenly the author of the book of Acts is with the team.

There's been no point previously that the author has included himself in the story. It's clear that Luke became part of the team in Troas. What was Luke doing in Troas? Was that his home? Again, a strong Christian tradition suggests that Luke was from Antioch.

And if so, then Barnabas and Paul and Silas may well have known Luke previously. Maybe he was in Troas on some other business or maybe Paul sent for him from Antioch. Or maybe he wasn't from Antioch.

He may have had connections to Philippi and he may have come over to Troas to do some kind of medical work. We don't know. He was a physician.

We don't know why Luke was there or how he became part of the team. But it's evident that while Paul and Silas and Timothy were in Troas, that they connected with Luke and obviously agreed that he should be part of their team and travel with them too. Now, maybe it wasn't so much that he was part of the team officially.

Maybe he was already a Christian physician whom they met in Troas and who was just on his way to Philippi anyway. And so he caught the same ship. So we sailed.

And then later, because they became acquainted with him on this journey, he later was asked to travel with Paul also. This is the first we section in the Book of Acts. There are three we sections where the author is with the story, is in the story.

And this first one goes all the way up to chapter 16, verse 39. Because at verse 40, we read, so they went out of the prison, entered the house of Lydia. And then it says in verse 17, now when they had passed through Amphibolus in Amphilonia.

So Luke is not with them at the beginning of chapter 17. In other words, he stays in Philippi. He sails with them to Philippi.

But when they leave Philippi, he stays behind. Now we're going to find that Paul leaves Philippi rather abruptly because of persecution. But there's a young church there he's leaving behind.

He may have deliberately said to Luke, hey, especially if Luke was a mature Christian at this time, why don't you kind of keep tabs on this church? Because we have to leave because they're going to, they're asking us to leave town. And because Luke was with them, he may have been entrusted with the oversight of the infant church there. And then later when Paul came through there, Luke joined him and went on another journey with him.

So Luke left Philippi later on. But the we sections are interesting because the author very, without any ostentatiousness at all introduces himself into the story, but it's very subtle. Suddenly it's just not they went, but we went.

And so Luke now joins them at Troas and sails with them to Neapolis. Now Samothrace, they went a straight course to Samothrace. That's an island.

As they're crossing the Aegean Sea, they probably stopped over the night at the island

of Samothrace. And then they made the trip across landing at Neapolis. The whole trip across is 125 miles.

They travel from Troas to Neapolis. Now Neapolis was the seaport for Philippi. Philippi was an important city, but it was 10 miles inland.

And so when people from Philippi traveled east, they went to the seaport of Neapolis. And then they'd, of course, they could go wherever they wanted to from there. Neapolis today is the city of Kavala in Northern Greece.

Kavala is the town now that was Neapolis. So they went there and says, and from there we went to Philippi, which was like I say, a 10 mile hike from Neapolis. Now Philippi was named after Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great.

Unlike the similar sounding city in Palestine called Caesarea Philippi, which was named after Herod Philip, another Philip, Herod Philip, and also Caesar. Caesarea is named after Caesar and Philippi after Herod Philip. But this Philippi was named after the father of Alexander the Great, Philip of Macedon.

And it was a major city. Luke says it was the foremost city of that part of Macedonia. It's not entirely clear what he means by the foremost city.

There were quite a few important cities in Philippi. It was not necessarily the most important, but there Macedonia was divided into four sub-provinces. And Philippi was the chief city of one of those.

And some scholars feel this when he says it's the foremost city, that he means it's the city of the foremost province of Macedon. So it's not entirely clear how Luke means that phrase. But it was, of course, an important city.

It was a Roman colony, which means the people who were born there had special privileges. One thing, they were exempt from taxes if they're a Roman colony. And so they were kind of proud to be Roman.

This is actually the first time that Paul came into an entirely Roman situation with a Roman administration. You know, the Romans govern Palestine. They govern the whole world.

But Palestine and Israel, though governed by Romans, was still a Jewish culture. The regions that he had evangelized on his first missionary journey were a Galatian culture. I mean, they were controlled by Rome.

But Philippi was the first culturally Roman situation Paul was in. It's also the first place that he had occasion to appeal to his Roman citizenship in order to claim some privilege. It's also a place where he first encountered people who were very loyal to Caesar.

And often people who are loyal to Caesar found that the teaching of Paul that there's another king, Jesus, was offensive. Now, that particular offense is not mentioned here in connection with Philippi, but later on with Thessalonica, another Roman city. But Philippi was a Roman colony.

And it says, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. We don't know how long they stayed, but some days.

Now, Macedonia is the northern part of Greece. The Grecian peninsula was divided in the Roman administration into two provinces. The northern province was Macedonia.

The southern province was Achaia. The capital of the southern province was Corinth. And you can see from the map, I gave you, that Greece, which is made up of Macedonia and Achaia, is a peninsula that reaches down into the Mediterranean, bordered on the east by the Aegean Sea and by the west on the Adriatic Sea.

And the northern part is Macedonia. The lower part is Achaia. Paul starts in Macedonia and works down into the booth there of the peninsula.

Eventually, he's at Athens and then Corinth. So on the map, you can see where he's going to go. He's going to start at Philippi, and he's going to go from there to Thessalonica and then to Berea.

And then he makes the long trip from Berea down to Athens and then to Corinth. So this is where we're going to, these are, this is the geography of the area. If you're looking at the map, you can get an idea of where these things are related to each other.

Okay, so he stayed some days in Philippi. Verse 13, on the Sabbath day, we went out of the city to the riverside where prayer was customarily made. And we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.

Ordinarily, Paul would meet in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, but apparently Philippi didn't have enough Jews. You needed to have 10 adult male Jews to have a synagogue, and there apparently were not that many Jewish men in the city. And where there was no synagogue, but there were some Jews, they would meet on the Sabbath day in some quiet place, in this case, down by a river.

So on the Sabbath, instead of going to a synagogue, which there were none in the town, Paul and his team went down to the riverside and worshiped and conversed with the Jewish women that happened to be down there. And he says, now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God.

The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken of by Paul. And when her house, when she and her household were baptized, she begged us saying, if you have judged

me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay. And she constrained us.

So her house probably became the first house church in Philippi. The early converts there would meet at her house. Paul and his team would stay there.

Now, Lydia was from Thyatira. That's over in Asia Minor. So she was across the Aegean Sea from her home.

She was a seller of purple. Thyatira, a town that's also mentioned in the book of Revelation, one of the seven churches, that Revelation is addressed to is in Thyatira, was known for its purple dye and its purple cloth that it sold, manufactured. Now, she may have been a sales representative for a seller in Thyatira who was living in Philippi.

She obviously wasn't just visiting Philippi. She had a house there. And so she was a businesswoman conducting business in Philippi.

And she's probably a Jewish woman. It doesn't say she was Jewish. She could have been a Gentile.

But she was with the Jews down at the riverside on the Sabbath. And she is one that the Lord opened her heart to listen to Paul. Again, Calvinists sometimes bring this up as a point that it's God who opens the heart of the believer and that the unsaved person cannot open their own heart.

They cannot turn to God without the sovereign grace of God opening their hearts. But it does say she was a worshiper of God before her heart was open. So she was already one whose heart was toward God.

And she was not a reprobate. She was a believer and a worshiper in God. And as it was the case with God showing Jews who were already that faithful remnant that they should follow the Messiah and they introduced them to the Messiah, that caused God to open her heart so that she listens to Paul and gets saved and becomes the hostess of the church there.

Now, it happened as we went to prayer that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us and cried out saying, these men are the servants of the most high God who proclaim to us the way of salvation. And this she did for many days.

But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out that very hour. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.

And they brought them to the magistrates and said, these men being Jews exceedingly

trouble our city. And they teach customs which are not lawful for us being Romans to receive and observe. Now, they kind of play the race card.

These guys are Jews were Romans and they're troubling our city, opposing our Roman standards. Then the multitude rose up together against them and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. Now, at this point, Paul could have said, I'm a Roman citizen.

You can't beat me. I've not been tried. But Paul kept his mouth shut up to this point.

He would speak of it later, but he let them beat him in order that he might gain an advantage over them, as we shall see. So he took the beating. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely.

Having received such a charge, he put them in the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. Now, apparently they were told the jailer was told these are dangerous men, make sure they're secure. So he put them in the deepest dungeon of the prison and put them in stocks, not only locked behind doors, but locked in stocks with their heads and their hands bound.

So they were in a bad way. They were beaten, their backs opened with stripes from the beating and very uncomfortable spending the night. And it says at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them.

Now, I need to make some comments about what's gone first. This woman that they delivered from a demon is said to have a spirit of divination is how it's translated here. In the Greek, it's literally a spirit, a python.

Now we know of a python as a snake, of course, but there was a particular python spirit in the ancient world that was believed to be the guardian of the Oracle of Delphi and inspired by the God Apollo. And a person of the spirit of python would give utterances which were believed to be inspired by the God Apollo. And so she was a fortune teller, giving these demonically inspired oracles and her owners, because she was a slave girl, they could make money off of her by having her tell people's fortunes and charging for it.

By the way, this python spirit later on, well, there are writers who considered this to be a word that's equivalent to being a ventriloquist. Plutarch, for example, the Latin writer, believed that this word referred to a ventriloquist. But where we think of a ventriloquist is someone who, as it were, throws his voice into a dummy.

The person with the spirit would be more like the dummy and Apollo would be the one speaking through them like a ventriloquist does through a dummy. But this word came to be associated with ventriloquism. But the Bible says specifically there was a demonic

spirit possessing this girl.

Now, it might surprise us that this demonic spirit inspired her to say, these men are the servants of the most high God who proclaim to us the way of salvation. That's the truth. Why would a demon tell the truth? Well, the interesting thing is that whenever demons speak out of people, generally speaking, in the Bible, they are telling the truth.

In the Gospels, in Luke, for example, chapter 4, verse 34, and in Luke 4, 41, and in Luke 8, 28, and other places in the Gospels, we read spiritual demon possessed people would meet Jesus and the spirits would speak and say, you're the Christ, you're the son of God, you're the son of the blessed. We know who you are. And they did.

And they were right. Jesus felt he could ask a demon a question and get a straight answer. He said, what's your name? And they said, we are legion.

There's a bunch of us. Apparently, they were telling the truth and Jesus expected them to. Sometimes we think that you can't trust what a demon possessed person says, and maybe you shouldn't always.

But in the Bible, when demon possessed people speak, they often are saying things that are true. But why? Why would they be saying these particular truths? And why, if they're saying such positive things, why did Paul get irritated and cast a demon out of her after several days? I think it is this that the devil's strategy is to give the impression that Jesus or the apostles are in league with him. You need to be careful about who you have commending you.

You don't want embarrassing supporters. And when someone who's known to be demon possessed is endorsing you, you are the Christ, you're the son of God. These are men of God.

They're telling the truth, the way of salvation. You know, technically, what's being said is true, but there's a certain subtext to that, that the one doing the commending is on the same team. The one is, you know, he's their promotional person.

And yet the one doing the commending is demon possessed. Paul didn't want his message, nor did Jesus want his identified with the demons at all. That people might get the impression that Paul was somehow in the same category with the spirit of Python, and that the spirit of Python was endorsing him.

This was something he did not need and did not want. Jesus didn't even want people who got healed to endorse him. He said, don't tell anyone about this.

Jesus was not looking for the endorsement of demons or people. He's looking for the endorsement of his father. He wanted God to promote his ministry, least of all demons.

And so that was probably Paul's attitude too. I don't want people to think that I'm somehow connected with this person who's commending me, who's recommending my ministry here. So he drives the demon out.

It says the demon came out that very hour, which makes you wonder, not that very moment? Did it take an hour or so, less than an hour? Hard to say. Sometimes demons don't come out immediately, but it didn't take much for Paul to drive it out. Just a word.

Paul had great authority over demons, just like Jesus did. In Acts 19, we will see that demons would come out of people, even when the person would receive a sweatband or an apron from Paul. And on one occasion, the demons in Ephesus said, we know Jesus and we know Paul, but who are you? They acknowledge Jesus.

They acknowledge Paul, but they didn't acknowledge these other people. So Paul's command to the demons caused the demon to leave. But this meant the girl could no longer tell fortune.

And that meant that her owners could no longer make money off her. That got them angry. And they stood up the crowd and got them arrested and thrown into prison, but beaten first.

And so we're going to take a break at this point, but we leave Paul and Silas in prison, beaten and in stocks, and singing praises to God into the night. And then we'll come back from our break and see how God acted in that situation to deliver them.