

## ACTS 15:35-16:3

A. Acts 15:35 - Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

1. During this time, it is likely that Peter made a visit to Antioch himself. After the council's meeting, evidently Peter was interested in how it was going among the Gentile believers at Antioch. His visit was **after** the council meeting, but **before** Paul and Barnabas split from each other.
2. We find out about Peter's visit in Galatians.

Galatians 2:11-14 - But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Gal. 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. Gal. 2:13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. Gal. 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

- a. Evidently the Jerusalem leaders were wondering how the Gentile church at Antioch was developing, or how **God** was working with them - **apart** from the Jews!
- b. Peter must have arrived first. He is enjoying the Gentile fellowship as he did in Acts 10 (sitting down to a **meal** with them).

\*As this fellowship continued, other Jewish brethren sent by James arrived. At this point (though they had been fellowshiping with the Gentiles), Peter and other Jews (Barnabas) **withdrew-separated** from eating with the Gentiles.

\*\*Evidently truth had not completely sunk into their **practice** yet.

- c. This must have broken Paul's **heart** after such a wonderful council verdict, and especially when his own missionary partner and close friend, Barnabas, also deserted Pauline truth by turning his back to the Gentiles.

\*By their **sinful** actions here, they were displaying cowardice, **hypocrisy** and repudiating their own Jerusalem council's decision (even the Holy Spirit's revealed will).

- d. Paul unashamedly stands for the Gospel of Grace and withstood Peter, the others, and Barnabas to their **faces**!

\*\*What if Paul had not spoken up? Galatians 2:11 states that Peter was to blame. His behavior was attempting (by Satan) to again build the middle wall/barrier between Jew and Gentile that he him**self** had helped to break **down** (Gal. 2:18; Acts 10).

- e. Thank God, Peter did have the character to overcome this open rebuke. Interestingly, the **last** person Peter mentions in his epistles (except for Jesus) is [our beloved brother Paul] in II Peter 3:15.

- f. The dispensation of grace was now getting stronger, as we see Paul's authority becoming **bigger** than Peter's in Galatians 2:14.

B.

Acts 15:36-41 - And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they do. Acts 15:37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. Acts 15:38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. Acts 15:39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; Acts 15:40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. Acts 15:41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

1. Paul had a **burden** for the churches that he, and others, had established. Paul **longed** to hear if those new converts were growing in faith and standing in spite of persecutions.

Jeremiah 3:15 - And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

II Corinthians 11:28 - Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

2. Paul is so concerned (he knew that Satan works) that he says to Barnabas, "Let's return and visit these churches". Barnabas was in agreement, but he only wanted to take John Mark **again** with them.

\*Paul thought that to be **un**wise and it created a big **dis**agreement/controversy between them.

\*\*Paul had remembered that earlier, when the going was tough, John Mark **left** the ministry. Barnabas, being the encourager and also related to John Mark, still wanted John Mark on the team.

3. Paul would not allow John Mark to go on this missionary trip, but Barnabas would not go without him. There was no giving in between Paul and Barnabas, so the dispute separated these **good** friends. Barnabas took John Mark and sailed to Cyprus; whereas, Paul chose Silas and traveled to Syria and Cilicia.

4. Question? After such a victory in Acts 15 (missionary buddies), **how** could this happen?

a. Proverbs 13:10 - Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised *is* wisdom.

b. Remember, Paul and Barnabas were human "men of like passions" (Acts 14:15). People have quarrels in difficult circumstances or intense decision making. There is the stress, flesh, feelings, and pressure that needs maturity and discernment that we don't always use.

c. No doubt, Mark's desertion must have **dis**appointed Barnabas. Barnabas probably made up his mind to try and help Mark, his cousin/nephew. Barnabas must have invited Mark to Antioch, because he was there. Barnabas could have felt that Mark was worth another chance, or opportunity, hoping Mark had learned his **lesson**.

\*Have you ever stuck your neck out for any of your relatives?

- d. Personally, I believe where the rub or contention comes in was because of Paul's **re**buke of Peter, others, and even Barnabas himself. Barnabas may have felt Paul owed him. Barnabas had been ranked **first** among the prophets at one time (Acts 13:1; 15:12,25). Little by little, Paul was taking the **pre**eminence. To top it off, now Paul openly rebuked Barnabas.

\*That no doubt was God's will, but could have been difficult for Barnabas to handle!

- e. Also, Paul's mystery message (apart from Israel) could have been part of the reason John Mark had left their ministry before. For Paul to have John Mark on his team again this soon, and also with Barnabas - who had to be openly rebuked for **do**ctrinal error in joining Peter and James' leaders - Paul thought it not **wise**. You want your team to be on the **same** page when minister-

ing

to others, and especially to the lost!

\*I believe Paul had lost **some** confidence in Barnabas, then now for him to unwisely want John Mark, Paul refused that.

\*\*I don't think Paul believed that Barnabas had **re**ceived Paul's rebuke of him not rightly divid-  
ing.

Proverbs 25:19 - Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble *is like* a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

- f. The fact that we see the Antioch church's approval of Paul and Silas to go on this second mission trip demonstrates that Paul had done **no**thing wrong. This approval was not said of Barnabas and Mark.

\*\*But remember, both Paul and Barnabas handled this split with **grace**!

- g. However, this is not saying that all four men did not have a heart for God - they **did**! Later Paul speaks highly **both** of Barnabas and Mark (I Cor. 9:6; Col. 4:10; Philemon 24). Later Mark redeems himself and Paul says in II Timothy 4:11 - [Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry].

- C. 1. As Paul passes through the region of Lystra, where he had preached before and was stoned, he comes

Acts 16:1-3 - Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek:  
Acts 16:2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.  
Acts 16:3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

across a young man that **God** places into Paul's life and ministry. This young man, Timothy, would become a great traveling companion and **helper** in Paul's ministry.

\*Timothy would become one of Paul's most faithful co-workers.

2. Timothy probably had been saved during Paul's **first** mission trip in that area. Timothy had a great reputation among the believers, as it says in Acts 16:2. Later Paul would call him his spiritual son in the Lord (I Tim. 1:2). Timothy became a follower and learner of Paul's **new** message. Timothy lived in Lystra. His father was a Greek, but his mother was Jewish (perfect picture of the Body of Christ). As a child, Timothy was brought up in the Jewish scriptures by his mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois. This made him **pre**pared to receive Paul's gospel of grace when Paul preached it on his first missionary journey.

II Timothy 3:15 - And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

3. Timothy did have some **health** issues that Paul told him how to deal with in I Timothy 5:23 - [Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities].
4. Timothy later would be Paul's right-hand man and was often sent to churches to straighten them out **doctrinally**.

I Corinthians 16:10 - Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also *do*.

I Corinthians 4:17 - For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

5. So, here in Acts 16, Paul has Timothy to join him and Silas in Lystra to go on his second mission trip. Paul did have Timothy to be circumcised, as a means to keep the door open when addressing **Jews** in their synagogues.

I Corinthians 9:19-20 - For though I be free from all *men*, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 1Cor. 9:20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

Acts 17:2 - And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

6. The reason I wanted to focus a little on Timothy is ❶ because we will see him throughout Paul's ministry and here in Acts 16-28, and ❷ in verse 1 it uses the word [behold] meaning to inform that something **important** was about to happen. It was about Timothy, and history (biblically) has proven this to be true. Timothy became **invaluable**!

II Timothy 3:10-11 - But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 2Tim. 3:11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

\* Evidently Paul's teachings and persecution at Lystra must have had a great **impact** upon Timothy.  
\* Two churches gave Timothy a good report in verse 2. His testimony had already begun to spread  
\* and have influence **outside his own city**.

7. Paul would have complete **trust** in Timothy.

Note: Philippians 2:19-22 - But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. Php. 2:20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. Php. 2:21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. Php. 2:22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

8. Paul's decision of whom he chose to go with him on his missionary journey was vital to **help** in the transition that was taking place. Timothy, a Jew and a Gentile, fit the Mystery program perfectly. Again, the question? Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised? This has **puzzled** many students of the Word.

Following are some extra reasons why:

- a. In Titus' case, believers at Jerusalem had sought to establish a principle that Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the Law to be saved. In that case, Paul would not submit Titus to do it (Gal. 2:5). Gentiles were not to be under law (Rom. 6:14).
  - b. But in Timothy's case, no one was seeking to impose circumcision on him. Timothy voluntarily was circumcised for the sake of unbelieving Jews that they would be encountering (vs. 3). This would remove any hindrance to their ministry among the Jews.
9. Remember, Paul's receiving of the great mystery truths of grace gradually and Timothy's circumcision took place before Paul wrote his first epistle. A few short years later, Paul wrote to the believers in Galatia - Jewish and Gentile.

Galatians 5:2-3 - Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. Gal. 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

- a. Note: It must be remembered that the Jerusalem council had not ruled against the circumcision of Jewish believers, and, at this time with Paul, it was "to the Jew first". Timothy was half-Jewish.
  - b. Note: If Paul had not had Timothy circumcised, he would have hindered Paul's ministry from the very start. In vs. 3, it says the Jews knew his father was a Greek, so naturally they suspected that Timothy was not circumcised - an alien from the commonwealth of Israel. Even a social time would have been hindered, because the Jews believed it was an abomination to eat with the uncircumcised.
  - c. So Paul is not making a concession to the Jewish people, but for the sake of unbelieving Jews to hear Paul's gospel. That is why he had Timothy circumcised. If not, Timothy could not have access to the synagogues and temples.
10. At this time of the transition from Judaism's kingdom to grace, Paul is simply stating that while we have no right to give up our liberty (Gal. 5:1), we do have the liberty to give up our right.

Galatians 5:13 - For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

11. But also remember, Paul is still in transition replacement here. It was not God's intent to have His two-fold ministry be at equal force at the same time. The Body was to replace the Kingdom program to the Jews gradually, and the Jews at this time were trying their best to hinder the gospel of grace.

\* Paul understood this. He taught the new mystery truths of grace and, sympathetically, was considerate to the unbelieving Jews' position. Paul simply forfeited some of his rights/liberty in order to not be an obstacle in winning some to Christ.



