

## *The Setting at Philippi*

### *Acts 15:36-16:40 – Lesson 15*

Situated on the main road from Rome to Asia on the Via Egnatian Way in northeastern Greece, Philippi was a leading city of Macedonia. It was one of six cities in Acts to be classified as a Roman colony, which was intended to function as a little piece of the city of Rome. The citizens of these colonies had identical civil rights as the citizens of Rome. The people there were both Romans and Greeks and spoke predominantly Greek even though Latin was the official language. It was a wealthy city because of the mines, its relationship to Rome, and its commercial importance on the Via Egnatia.

When Paul entered Philippi what he would have seen was a Roman military city filled with retired military men who tended to despise Jews. Discharged soldiers were given fertile land to farm and settled in the city. As a result, few Jews had settled there. According to Paul's missionary strategy, it was necessary for the Gospel to first be preached to the Jewish community in every city they visited (Acts 13:46). Surprisingly, there was no synagogue in Philippi. Just ten adult circumcised males were required to form a synagogue, but Philippi had only a "place of prayer" (16:13) where women gathered. Inscribed on the arches outside the city of Philippi was a prohibition against bringing an unrecognized religion into the city.

Emperor worship thrived in Philippi, but so did the worship of Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Asia Minor deities.

Some scholars have suggested that Luke's hometown was Philippi, which is a possibility borne out by the pronouns used in the book of Acts. Luke appears to have stayed in Philippi for at least six years.

*Philippi's greatest distinction lies in its status as the first European city in which Paul preached the Gospel and where the first Christian church was established. Luke devotes more narrative space to the events occurring in this city than any other on this missionary journey or the next.*



Arriving back in Derbe and Lystra, Paul and Silas are introduced to this godly family that included Timothy.

5. a. What facts can you put together about his life from 16:1-3 and 2 Timothy 1:5?
  - b. Timothy will be Paul's companion for most of the rest of the apostle's life—a father-son relationship developed of the deepest and most affectionate nature. Writing over a decade later how does Paul refer to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:2 and 2 Timothy 1:2?

### ***Life Lesson***

Dr. Howard Hendricks has always taught that each of us needs a Paul, a Barnabas, and a Timothy in our lives. We need a Paul to teach us, a Barnabas to encourage us, and a Timothy to learn from us. *If you don't have people like that in your life right now, pray and ask God to lead you to them—and them to you!*

6. Considering the decision made by the Jerusalem Council, what was Paul's purpose in circumcising Timothy? Check one of the following:
  - There was still spiritual value in circumcision
  - For Timothy to be acceptable when evangelizing Jews in the Synagogues
  - For medical reasons; to promote healthy hygiene

*Also check out 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.*

As Paul, Silas and Timothy passed on to new territory, what happened was entirely unexpected.

7. Describe what took place in Acts 16:6-9. *Give some thought to what these experiences would have been like!*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How has God guided you by closing doors or by His direct leading?

In Acts 16:6-10 we are given a striking picture of the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—working together to guide His children. **Read** and *mark verses 6, 7 and 10.*

9. **Stop and Reflect on the power of the Trinity in your life.** What practical lessons can you learn about the guidance of the Triune God through the experience of Paul and his companions?

**Note:** In Acts 16:10 the pronoun “we” is used for the first time instead of “they,” implying that Luke, the author of this book, probably joined Paul and his companions at this time. [*On Map 5 trace the party’s route in Acts 16:10-12 using your colored pencil.*]

*This was the beginning point from which the influence of the Gospel of Christ changed the course of history. The Christian nations of Europe became the dominate influence in the world reaching down through the centuries to us!*

Luke tells the exciting and dramatic story of the creation of the first European church through three vignettes involving people from an amazing cross-section of the population who each came in contact with the Gospel in Philippi. **Read** Acts 16:11-40.

10. Who were they? Give a brief description of each person.

**Revisit** Acts 16:13-15 using a different translation. **Read** the handout “The Setting in Philippi.”

11. a. What do you find significant about Paul’s first evangelistic contact in Macedonia?

b. What common ground did Paul find with Lydia that allowed him to share Christ with her? Why was it necessary for God to open Lydia’s heart (John 6:44)?

c. Tell how the conversion of Lydia, an influential merchant, might have opened the way for ministry in that region. Also reflect on Acts 16:15 before commenting.

If you heard the call—“*Come over and help us find the way to God*”—how would you respond? Are you prepared?

12. How would you find common ground with the following people in order to share Christ with them?

- A Muslim

- A student of philosophy

- A widow

- A neighbor who knows nothing about the Bible

In Acts 16:16-40 Luke continues his first-hand account of the events in Philippi. The next contact comes from a significantly different part of society.

13. According to verse 16, in what two ways was the life of this girl bound?

*Note:* In Acts 16:16 the Greek text actually says, “python spirit.” People came from all over the Mediterranean world to the city of Delphi to consult the priestesses (called *Pythis*) for advice.

14. Why do you think an evil spirit in the slave girl was uttering something that was true, particularly a truth about the message of the Gospel? What does this tell you about the methods of Satan?

After several days of this Paul stepped in to stop her. The word Luke uses seems to indicate that Paul was both irritated and disturbed by her behavior.

15. What miracle did Paul perform? Are these types of miracles still needed today? Explain.

**As a result of the work done in the life of this young girl, the city was turned into an uproar!**

16. Notice how the slave owners disguised their case as an issue of patriotism rather than the pocketbook (Acts 16:19-21). For what were Paul and Silas charged?

**A mob rapidly formed and surrounded the missionaries in the public marketplace.**

17. Describe how Paul and Silas were persecuted for preaching the Gospel (verses 22-24).

*We can so easily pass over this lightly; take time to linger over these words.*

*Because the Romans did not have Jewish law that limited the severity of beatings, Paul and Silas were probably scarcely able to move from blood loss and lacerated muscles. Sitting or lying with their feet fastened in stocks so that they could neither shift nor roll over must have been agony.*

**Stop and Ponder:** Is there anything about making the Christian Gospel known to others for which we would be prepared to suffer such pain?

*With Paul and Silas in prison—we are ready for the third Divine encounter of the Gospel in Philippi, this time in the life of the jailer! Midnight found Paul and Silas still awake, understandably unable to sleep. Although their bodies were broken their spirits were not!*

18. Close your eyes. Picture yourself as a fellow prisoner of Paul and Silas. What do you hear and see (verse 25)?

Ponder how a Christian can choose joy in the midst of such unpleasant conditions.

19. What attitudes toward self, God, circumstances, the other prisoners, or the jailer do these actions show?

20. Describe the supernatural events that night that led up to the jailer's question: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:26-30.)

21. What things stand out to you the most in the final scene of Acts 16:31-40?

*And so the church at Philippi begins—a place that will give Paul much joy (Philippians 1:3-5)!*

There is no adventure in life like the adventure of seeing and experiencing the plan of God for your life as it unfolds. . .

22. How do you think the Holy Spirit would have you apply and respond to what you have studied in Acts chapter 16?

His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower  
-William Cowper

Bev Horn



Paul's Second Missionary Journey