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By Dan Maines

Acts 16

Acts 16:1-2

Now Paul also came to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brothers and sisters who were in Lystra and Iconium.

† Timothy became Paul's closest companion in ministry. His mixed heritage symbolized the union of Jew and Gentile in Christ.

† The Mishnah (Kiddushin 3.12) records debates over mixed

marriages, showing why Timothy's parentage was significant in Jewish eyes.

Acts 16:3

Paul wanted this man to leave with him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

† Paul circumcised Timothy not for salvation, but to remove stumbling blocks for Jewish evangelism. This act contrasted with his refusal to circumcise Titus (Galatians 2:3), showing flexibility for the sake of the gospel.

Acts 16:4-5

Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the ordinances which had been determined by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, for them to follow. So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

† The decisions of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) were confirmed and spread, promoting unity and growth.

Acts 16:6-8

They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, after being forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. And passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.

† The Spirit directed the mission, closing some doors and opening others. The gospel's spread was under divine control, not human strategy.

Acts 16:9-10

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and pleading with him, and saying, "Come over to

Macedonia and help us." When he had seen the vision, we immediately sought to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

† The Macedonian vision marked the gospel's entry into Europe. Notice the "we" section begins here, showing Luke's presence as eyewitness.

Acts 16:11-12

So after setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were spending some days in this city.

† Philippi was a Roman colony, full of retired soldiers and Roman culture. This gave the church a strategic base.

† Roman inscriptions confirm Philippi's colonial status, aligning Acts with archaeology.

Acts 16:13-15

And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were thinking that there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. Now when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

† Lydia became the first convert in Europe. Her heart was opened by the Lord, showing salvation is God's work.

† Purple fabric was a luxury trade item, linking Lydia to wealth and influence.

Acts 16:16-18

It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave woman who had a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing great profit to her masters by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you a way of salvation." Now she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and he turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

† The spirit of divination literally means "python spirit," tied to the oracle of Delphi. Paul's command in Jesus' name showed Christ's authority over demonic powers.

† Plutarch (Moralia, The Oracles at Delphi) explains the cultural connection to pythonic prophecy.

Acts 16:19-21

But when her masters saw that their hope of profit had been suddenly lost, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men, Jews as they are, are causing our city trouble, and they are proclaiming customs that are not lawful for us to accept or to practice, since we are Romans."

† Economic loss fueled opposition. Their accusation framed Paul and Silas as disturbers of Roman order.

Acts 16:22-24

The crowd joined in an attack against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their

feet in the stocks.

† Paul and Silas were publicly humiliated, beaten, and imprisoned unjustly. Roman law normally protected citizens, but prejudice led to abuse.

† Cicero (Against Verres 2.5.162) speaks of the illegality of beating Roman citizens, which makes this episode significant.

Acts 16:25-26

Now about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened.

† Their worship in suffering became a testimony. God shook the prison with His power, setting captives free.

Acts 16:27-30

When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul called out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" And the jailer asked for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas; and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

† The jailer's despair turned to salvation. Roman guards were liable with their lives for escaped prisoners, explaining his desperation.

Acts 16:31-34

They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of God to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he

brought them into his house and set food before them, and was overjoyed, since he had become a believer in God together with his whole household.

† Salvation came by faith in Christ, not works. Baptism marked his immediate inclusion in the covenant. His joy showed true transformation.

Acts 16:35-37

Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their officers, saying, "Release those men." But Paul said to them, "After beating us in public without due process, men who are Romans, they have thrown us into prison, and now they are releasing us secretly? No indeed! On the contrary, let them come in person and lead us out."

† Paul asserted his Roman citizenship to protect the gospel's integrity. The authorities had violated Roman law.

Acts 16:38-40

The officers reported these words to the chief magistrates. And they became fearful when they heard that they were Romans, and they came and pleaded with them; and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. They left the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brothers and sisters, they encouraged them and departed.

† The magistrates' fear confirmed the seriousness of their unlawful actions. Paul and Silas encouraged the believers before departing, leaving a strong witness.

How it applies to us today

† God directs the mission, opening doors and closing others.

† True salvation is by faith, demonstrated in immediate obedience and joy.

† Believers must stand firm in trials, using every opportunity to glorify Christ.

† Our worship and perseverance in suffering can become the strongest testimony to the world.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Mishnah, Kiddushin 3.12 – Mixed marriages in Jewish law

† Roman inscriptions – Philippi as a Roman colony

† Plutarch, Moralia, The Oracles at Delphi – Python spirit connection

† Cicero, Against Verres 2.5.162 – Illegality of beating Roman citizens

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