

## TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON ACTS (VOL II)

35. By whose authority was the letter (epistle) written?

36. Were the prohibitions placed upon the Gentiles temporary or permanent in nature?

37. Can we “make trial” of God today as the men did in ch. 15?

### LESSON THREE

( 15:36 - 18:22)

#### The Second Missionary Journey

15:36 - 18:22

#### In Antioch, 15:36-40

*36 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Come, let us return and visit the brethren in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” 37 And Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. 39 And there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.*

V. 36 - Paul is just as interested in the upbuilding of Christians, their faith-progress, as he is in “disciplining” people, since each is equally important. Neither is to be neglected for Christian

growth is a must on the list of items for consideration by any church group. Paul felt the need for “daily care of the churches” (II Cor. 11:32), whether in Antioch or elsewhere. He now felt that it was wise to return to the converts in the Galatian area, since they were to suffer many things that could disturb their faith, 14:22.

V. 37 - John Mark was a relative (a cousin) of Barnabas, and probably was being considered by Barnabas in this light.

V. 38 - Each man was unchanging in his attitude about the matter, Barnabas insisting, Paul refusing.

V. 39 - It is ever the part of God to “tell it like it is.” So, we are treated to the occasion of two good men, each indebted to the other, who yet disagreed over another and, unable to resolve the matter, agreed to disagree. Doubtless God had this written down for “our admonition and our learning.” Often times it will be this way in regard to where one worships, or what methods one uses, where one labors, etc. We need to carefully consider the difference between likes and dislikes and doctrine, and keep them separated. One may even differ in matters of conscience (which often is equated in Scripture) with another, and yet both remain Christian.

V. 40 - Whether the brethren gave Barnabas and Mark the send-off they gave to Paul is not stated. We will see that Paul’s group returns to Antioch. No historical mention is made of Barnabas again, though Paul mentions him in I Cor. 15, and several references to Mark are in Paul’s letters. Silas probably the Silvanus of II Cor. 1:19; I Thess. 1; I Peter 5:12.

#### Through to Provinces of Syria and Cilicia, 15:41

*41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.*

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V. 41 - The route would be past Paul's home in Tarsus, over the mountains through the Cilician Gates, a rough and dangerous journey.

### **At Derbe, 16:1a**

**16** *And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra.*

16:1 - The presence of churches in Syria and Cilicia is mentioned, though we are not told how they arose. Perhaps they arose from Pentecost, or through Paul's efforts. (Note here 15:24.)

### **In Lystra, 16:1b-5**

*A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.*

V. 2 - Timothy, Paul's "son" in the faith, would serve well, and become a most valuable member of the Lord's team. Evidently the brethren thought highly of him.

V. 3 - The mixed background of Timothy made his acceptability to Jews questionable. Therefore, though no law was at issue, the factor of expediency was obviously considered valuable enough to cause Timothy's circumcision. This is most important to consider in the light of what happened in ch. 15, where Titus was not circumcised, though pressure to do so to keep the law was brought to bear.

### **Through the Cities of Iconium and Antioch to Whom They Delivered the Decrees of the Jerusalem Council, 16:4,5**

V. 4 - In keeping with the intent of the conference, Paul and Silas convey the decision of Acts 15 to the various churches along the way. The general matters of the letter are contained in I Cor. 8-10 and Rom. 14:1-15:13. We must remember that the N.T. was mostly yet unwritten. What was written, if anything, would not be readily available to but a few. We also note that though the Holy Spirit directed its inception and writing, we have no actual copy of it except in Acts 15. There may have been other such epistles produced about which we know nothing.

V. 5 - A result of the missionary journey was that churches were strengthened.

### **Through the Region of Phrygia and Galatia, 16:6a**

Cf. Galatians 4:13-15; I Cor. 16:1,2

*6 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia,*

V. 6 - The item of interest here: the restraint upon the men from the Holy Spirit. If this is so in other places and times, as seems evident, the Holy Spirit controlled more of the apostles' activities than just their speech and writings.

### **While in the Above Stated Regions They Were Forbidden by the Spirit to Speak the Word in Asia. They Passed Through the Province of Mysia and Attempted to go into the Province of Bithynia but They Were Again Forbidden, 16:6b-8a**

*having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia,*

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*but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; 8 so, passing by Mysia,*

V. 7 - The Holy Spirit “hindered” (forbid) in v. 6, and will not permit (again forbid) in v. 7.

V. 8 - Troas was the major seaport serving all of the area.

### **At Troas, 16:8b-10**

*they went down to Troas 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the he night; a man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” 10 And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*

V. 9 - The vision Paul received is like that of Cornelius in chapter 10 and is the first positive response in direction, which, of course, Paul obeyed, even as he had obeyed the negative command.

V. 10 - Macedonia was a province in the Roman empire, though in another continent.

Luke joined the party, and continued with it to Philippi, where he remained when the others left.

### **At Samothrace, 16:11a**

### **At Neapolis, 16:11b**

*11 Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis,*

V. 11 - The sailing weather was good, taking two days for what was later a five-day journey (20:6), 125 miles.

### **In Philippi, 16:12-40**

*12 and from there to Philippi, which is the leading city of the district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days; 13 and on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. 14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, with her household, she besought us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.*

*16 As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. 17 She followed Paul and us, crying, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation”. 18 And this she did for many days, but Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour.*

*19 But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; 20 and when they had brought them to the magistrates they said, “These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. 21 They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice.” 22 The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. 23 And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. 24 Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

*25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, 26 and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and every one’s fetters were unfastened. 27 When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he*

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*drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." 29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" 31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. 34 Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.*

*35 But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." 36 And the jailer reported the words to Paul, saying "The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore come out and go in peace." 37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now cast us out secretly? No! let them come themselves and take us out." 38 The police reported these word to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; 39 so they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. 40 So they went out of the prison, and visited Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they exhorted them and departed.*

V. 12 - Philippi (its name from Philip the Great) was near the area where a decisive battle in Rome's history took place. (Octavius and Anthony vs. Brutus and Cassius; and later Octavius defeated Anthony and Cleopatra. 31 B.C.) Philip had taken over the city because of the gold mines nearby. However, because it was on the main thoroughfare between Europe and Asia, its importance grew and commerce increased. It was made a Roman colony in 42 B.C., which meant its citizens received all the benefits of any Roman citizen.

V. 13 - It is noticeable that in all these cities (Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea), women are

prominent in the happenings. Archaeological evidence in Macedonia indicates that women were afforded much greater privileges than elsewhere.

V. 14 - Lydia was a common name, although her occupation was not so common. Some evidence exists to show that the Jews in Thyatira were involved in the dye business, which may be where Lydia received her knowledge of God, etc.

The basic problem is not new: how or why did God open Lydia's heart? The answer may well vary, even if your theology is not Calvinistic. See Luke 24:45 in this vein.

Proponents of infant baptism over the centuries have used this text and others to argue for their position. Obviously, their position is weak from several angles. The New Testament Scriptures always insist that each person is accountable to God, and one's relationship to God. The New Testament Scriptures do not teach anything except believer's immersion. Clearly, infants can not believe for themselves, and it is never stated that anyone else can believe for them. The inferences that are drawn (that the word "household" means all obeyed through the person who was the head, or that infants were in the household) are not provable at all. Their position is only mentioned because the point needs clarification.

V. 15 - The Philippian epistle is good evidence of the positive results which took place through the efforts of Paul's company.

Lydia's hospitality would be something for which Christians would be noted everywhere. She may have encouraged others to continue to help Paul, as they evidently did (Phil. 4).

V. 16 - **Spirit of Divination** - The Greek term was used in the Greek O.T. (LXX) of such as the witch of Endor (I Sam. 28) and those described as "mediums" in Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Isaiah 8:19, etc. As v. 18 indicates, the girl was inhabited by a spirit.

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The owners used the girl as a steady source of income. How much she willingly cooperated with the men is not stated.

V. 17 - Even though her testimony about the men was accurate, perhaps it was like that of demons to Jesus, which testimony he rejected because of the source (i.e., the devil. Note Mark 1:34. It may well have been because of such testimony that some accused Jesus of being in league with Satan).

V. 18 - Because the woman kept up her testimony for many days, Paul exercised miraculous powers (as did Peter, 3:6) to instantly “heal” the woman. As in all cases, Jesus’ power through the apostles was greater than the demon’s power (note Matt. 12:22ff).

V. 19 - The men, with a vested interest, reacted as most others: adversely, since their hope (source) of gain was now gone. That Christians were not free from such self-interests is evident in II Cor. 2:14-17. It will do us all good to consider why we wish certain people or institutions to continue rather than be phased out or discontinued.

**Agora** - This is the common term for marketplace or forum. Paul stood in Athens at the marketplace, 17:17. It was also the area where the judges appeared to hold court, etc.

V. 20 - Some think that the “rulers” of v. 19 and the “magistrates” here were the same persons described two different ways; while others feel that two different groups of rulers were meant. It is not too important in the end.

**Being Jews** - Whether or not the accusers knew, or, knowing, cared that Jews and Christians were different groups is not stated. Doubtless many did not perceive the fact was so (see 18:14-15; 25:14-19). The men were only interested in eliminating two troublemakers.

V. 21 - As this verse shows, the two men were merely considered as Jews of a certain brand. It seems to be apparent that the Romans allowed much religious freedom as long as no disruptions were evident. That the Jews actually made many into “God fearers” is also evident. When Christianity came into being, disruptions occurred, however, and thus the Romans were often involved. The statement of the girl’s owners about being “Romans” indicated that Jews were still a despised race in most Roman eyes.

V. 22 - We should note the mob spirit, that unthinking attitude that so often is evident in world history. Christianity is so very different from this, making its appeal to reason and to personal, individual responsibility. Paul will mention “shameful treatment” in Philippi (I Thess. 2:2) and that he had been beaten with rods “three” times (II Cor. 11). The Greek term for “gave orders” indicates that the orders were repeatedly given; the mob spirit was even in the magistrates.

V. 23 - As far as these beating went, no limit was placed as in Jewish law. It was the whim of the officer.

V. 24 - An inner prison was normally made so that no opening was in it except the door. Hence, the stocks were only additional forms of punishment, and not necessary for their safe-keeping.

V. 25 - Those totally committed to a cause as great as Christianity would be able to rejoice even with such circumstances as were upon the men. They were but practicing what Jesus taught in Matt. 5:11-12. The other prisoners were listening, some doubtless in awe and wonder. Perhaps the jailer listened too.

V. 26 - Since Paul and Silas were praying as well as singing, perhaps part of their prayers were directed to God in connection with their awful situations. At least God answered in a most impressive way (note 4:31).

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V. 27 - The jailer assumed too much; he, except for Paul, would have taken his life, and needlessly. His action was little different from the prior action of the mob - both were unthinking. He was responsible for the prisoners, and should have exercised some responsibility in regard to himself.

V. 28 - Brutus had taken his life near Philippi. It seems that the place was rather well-known for suicides.

Apparently some lights were in existence in the outer prison so that Paul could see what the man was about to do.

V. 29 - The jailer, unnerved by it all, fell down at the feet of the men, perhaps to worship them, surely to question them. His state of mind was like that described of Moses, 7:32; Hebrews 12:21.

V. 30 - The jailer's question is probably best understood in the light of the answer he received, although it could be understood in other ways (the Greek word means "save" in many ways, physical as well as otherwise.)

V. 31 - The answer is best understood in the sense that salvation (by faith) was in Christ rather than anywhere else, instead of in the more narrow sense of "believe," then "repent" then "be immersed" etc. The jailer was to accept Jesus for his salvation, trusting totally in Christ in place of anyone or anything else. The same thing could be true for this family as for him - all or any could trust in Jesus for salvation, as Peter said in 10:43, and Paul said in 13:39.

V. 32 - The men amplified the true but comprehensive statement in v. 31, so that the meager knowledge the jailer had would be added to and better understood by him and those of his household. We should add, however, that the issue of faith in connection with salvation is not the degree of faith in Jesus that one possesses, but the presence or absence of faith in Jesus that counts. One either believes (trusts) that Jesus is able to

save, or one doesn't so believe. Faith should increase, however, II Peter 1:5ff.

V. 33 - Here is a good test to consider two words involving usage of water - the jailer washed/bathed the outside of the prisoners' bodies, but he was washed/immersed for the afflictions of this inner man.

V. 34 - Like the treasurer in Acts 8:39, he rejoiced in the trust he had placed in Jesus ) as did those of his household who had obeyed too).

V. 35 - Why the magistrates decided to let Paul and Silas go free is not known.

V. 36 - **In peace** - Probably the jailer, much more aware of the total situation than his bosses, suggested the "in peace". He may well have understood more about peace than at any time previous. Too, he could but rejoice over the sudden change of attitudes of the magistrates.

V. 37 - Paul's reply must have caused fear in the magistrates. It was unlawful to so treat any Roman. Emperor Claudius had taken the freedom from the city of Rhodes for having crucified a Roman citizen. The historian Cicero wrote, "To fetter a Roman citizen was a crime, to scourge him a scandal, to slay him parricide."

In Paul's reply, he says that the magistrates wanted "to cast them out" which he rejects, and used a word which means "let them come and escort us out," since they were Roman citizens who had been flogged without an investigation, and cast into prison - all beneath the treatment deserved by an Roman.

V. 38 - The magistrates were justly afraid, and tried to make the best of a bad matter.

V. 39 - Silas and Paul were escorted out, and were "begged" to leave, having been consoled/comforted. The Greek term is at times translated exhort, beseech. It may well be that the

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official action helped preclude any more mistreatment by the crowds.

V. 40 - Note “brethren” which shows several persons in mind. Seemingly only Silas and Paul leave, the others as Luke either remaining behind.

### QUESTIONS

38. How could Paul and Barnabas “agree to disagree” and yet be brothers?

39. Did Paul spend all of his time evangelizing, or did he also spend time teaching in churches?

40. What was one result in the churches of the deliverance of the decree from Jerusalem?

41. Noting the interference of the Holy Spirit in the places where Paul planned to go, where else do we have any record of direction by the Holy Spirit in his activities?

42. Would direction from the Holy Spirit at one point in life mean that all of life was likewise directed (i.e. no free will at all?)

43. What sections of acts are “we” sections where Luke wrote in first person?

44. Describe Lydia.

45. How do you understand the phrase about God opening her heart?

46. Why do you think Paul was annoyed by what the girl was saying?

47. Why did he cast the demon out of her? Couldn't she keep on saying the same thing about him and Silas?

48. Why did the slave owners take Paul and Silas to the market place?

49. What customs were being advocated by Paul and Silas which were unlawful for Romans to keep?

50. Were the charges leveled against the men actually the reasons for their seizure?

51. How widespread was the earthquake?

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52. Do you think that God sent the earthquake?

53. How much does the text state that the jailer knew about his two prisoners?

54. What evidence is there for infant immersion (i.e., “household baptisms”)?

55. Why did Paul insist on a public and personal apology?

56. How many Christians were in Philippi?

Caesarea in Palestine in political influence. Paul remarked in I Thess. 1:8 that the gospel had “sounded forth” (from Thessalonica) everywhere. I Thess. 2:20 has Paul saying that the converts in Thessalonica were his “glory and joy”. He boasted to churches of their “steadfastness and faith” in all their persecutions, II Thess. 1:4. Note the description of the Jews there in 2:14-16. Through the middle ages it was a stronghold of Christianity in the East.

### At Thessalonica, 17:1b-10a

*where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And Paul went in as was his custom, and for three weeks he argued with them from the scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” 4 And some of them were persuaded, and joined Paul and Silas; as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. 5 But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked fellows of the rabble, they gathered a crowd, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brethren before the city authorities, crying, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has received them; and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” 8 And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard this. 9 And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. 10. The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Beroea;*

## LESSON FOUR (17:1-34)

### Passing Through the Cities of Amphipolis and Appollonia, 17:1a

**17** *Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Appollonia, they came to Thessalonica.*

V. 1 - Paul apparently did not stop in Amphipolis or Appollonia - they were both important cities - but went to Thessalonica, the capital city of Macedonia, about 100 miles from Philippi. It ranked with Antioch of Syria and

V. 2 - Paul reasoned/discussed from the “writings” (i.e., Scriptures) with the Jews in the synagogue, where he went first, as was his custom. He remarked in I Thess. 1:9 that some there had turned from idols; so his ministry encompassed people like the Greeks, v. 4. I Thess. 2 and II Thess. 3 both bring up Paul’s manner of life there.