

# 'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #21

## Acts 16:1-24 (NASB)

### Acts 16:1-10 (NASB)

Paul came also 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, <sup>2</sup> and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. <sup>3</sup> Paul wanted this man to go 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.

<sup>4</sup> Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. <sup>5</sup> So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

<sup>6</sup> They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; <sup>7</sup> and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; <sup>8</sup> and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. <sup>9</sup> A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." <sup>10</sup> When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

### Q: How old was Timothy?

- If Timothy already had a good reputation as a follower of Christ in neighboring towns, it is not likely that he was a child or a new convert.
- Luke refers to Timothy as a "man" in [verse 3](#).

### Q: Paul has already gone to great lengths to prove that Gentiles didn't have to be circumcised; so why does he circumcise Timothy?

- Having Timothy circumcised was not about making him acceptable to God, but making him acceptable to the Jews!
  - To be accepted into the synagogues, he and his companions would have to be accepted as full-fledged Jews in order to move freely within that community.



Q: God told Paul not to speak the Word in Asia, and then prevented them from going north into Bithynia. How did they figure out where God wanted them to go?

- God got them moving in the right direction, then closed the doors to the places that seemed obvious; leading them to someplace they had not thought about.

Q: It's one thing to trust God's guidance when it's obvious what you should do, but what do you do when it isn't so obvious?

- Go through the doors that are open, and don't try to kick down the doors that are closed!

Q: What does it mean that Luke starts using the word "we" in [verse 10](#)?

- Paul and his companions met Luke in Troas, the place where they landed by letting God choose which doors they went through!

## **Acts 16:11-24 (NASB)**

So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;<sup>12</sup> and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.<sup>13</sup> **And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.**<sup>14</sup> **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.**<sup>15</sup> And 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.<sup>16</sup> It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.<sup>17</sup> Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, **“These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.”**<sup>18</sup> She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and 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.<sup>19</sup> But when her masters saw that **their hope of profit was gone**, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,<sup>20</sup> and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, **“These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews,**<sup>21</sup> **and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.”**<sup>22</sup> The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.<sup>23</sup> When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;<sup>24</sup> and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

### **Q: Why does Paul go to the riverside on the Sabbath, instead of the synagogue like he usually does?**

- Philippi didn't have a synagogue.
- There probably were not enough Jewish men to form a synagogue.
- There had to be at least 10 Jewish men to form a synagogue.
- What Philippi *did* have was a regular place of prayer—  
3 an informal location outside of town, down by the river.

### **Q: Why is it important for Luke to tell us this?**

- Paul was faced with opposition everywhere he preached the gospel.
- Up till now, it has been primarily the Jews who were opposing him; but now **Luke is going to introduce new sources of opposition.**

### **Q: Why is it important for Luke to tell us that Lydia is from Thyatira and “a seller of purple fabrics”?**

- Being from Thyatira means it is almost certain that Lydia was not a Jew, but a *convert* to Judaism.
  - She, like Cornelius ([Acts 10](#)), had been seeking God and praying to Him. Could it have been because of her prayers that Paul received the vision in his dream at Troas ([Acts 16:9](#))?
- Lydia was a businesswoman working with high-end goods, which is probably why she moved to Philippi, a hub of commercial activity.
  - **Being highly placed in society gave Lydia power and influence.**

### **Q: Why did Lydia think it was a good idea to have Paul and his companions stay at her house?**

- Lydia knew that Paul would be more successful in establishing the ministry if they had a respectable base of operations.
- In other words, Lydia viewed their conversion as an acceptance of her partnership in the mission, and wanted to do her part!
  - For Lydia, it wasn't all about her and what God was going to do for her... it was about what God wanted to do **through** her.

**Q: Luke introduces 3 new forces opposed to the gospel in Philippi. What are they?**

### 1. False Religion (Forces of Darkness - [Eph 6:12](#))

- a. Greek society was pantheistic and heavily into “divination”, and would go to places like Delphi and Corinth to get advice on just about everything.
  - i. Most of the time, these were probably con artists taking advantage of gullible people... but sometimes, like here in Philippi, there was a demon actually prophesying.
  - ii. The dynamic behind idols and false gods is always demons ([Deut. 32:16-17](#); [Lev. 17:7](#)).
- b. Satan wants to be worshiped ([Matt. 4:9](#)), and demons teach false doctrines in order to deceive people ([1Tim. 4:1](#)).
  - i. It’s no wonder they would help create and sustain religions that offer multiple gods and goddesses to keep people looking for a god to serve them, instead of finding the God who calls them to serve Him!
- c. When the girl with the demon came across Paul, she was pulled to him like a compass needle to a magnet.
  - i. This isn’t the first time demons have responded like this ([Luke 4:33-37](#); [Mark 5:7-8](#)).
- d. This was throwing a big wrench in the works of the religious establishment!

### 2. Money

- a. People paid big money to hear from “The God Most High”.
  - i. In these Greek societies, “**The God Most High**” would not have been thought to be the God of Abraham, but rather Zeus or whomever they thought of as the “top dog” deity in the area.
  - ii. “**Salvation**” wouldn’t mean the same thing Jews and Christians think either. For Christians and Jews, “salvation” meant entry into God’s New Creation, overcoming corruption, sin, and death. For Greeks, “salvation” meant health, prosperity, or rescue from some kind of disaster.

- b. When Paul cast the demon out, the girl’s owners lost their source of income, and the local economy probably lost some tourist money.

### 3. Politics

- a. The girl’s owners identify Paul and Silas as Jews... and that they were advocating customs which “**we Romans**” shouldn’t accept or observe.
- b. Philippi was a Roman colony, and sat at the crossroads between Rome and anywhere you would want to go in Turkey... so it was important to Rome; and Rome would act swiftly and severely if any “anti-Roman” element were to take root.

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## Follow Up Assignment

Q: How do you decide what God wants you to do when the answer isn’t obvious?

- Is there a door you’re trying to kick open right now?
- Is there an open door you aren’t willing to walk through?

Q: Lydia understood that being a Christian meant she had a role to play in the Gospel mission. What role are you playing in the Gospel mission?

Q: Religion, money, and politics are always threatened by the gospel message; and they will try to crush anyone who dares to preach and live the gospel. How have these forces tried to stop you?

- If you haven’t faced their opposition, why not?