

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 5TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

A NEW WORKER (ACTS 16:1–5)

THE 2ND JOURNEY STARTED IN REVERSE ORDER

Paul traveled in reverse order, and while in Lystra, a disciple named Timothy was enlisted to replace John Mark as Paul's assistant.

- It's believed that Timothy's mother and grandmother paved the way for him (2 Timothy 1:5), and he came to faith on the first missionary journey after seeing all Paul suffered for the gospel (Acts 14:19–20; 2 Timothy 3:10–11).

"PAUL WANTED TIMOTHY TO GO WITH HIM"

Luke tells us that Timothy had a good reputation in the cities of Lystra and Iconium and was born into a mixed marriage of a Jewish mother and **"his father was a Greek."**

- Some scholars suggest that Timothy's father passed away years earlier. Whatever the case, the uncircumcised son of a Jewish mother would have been viewed as an apostate.

PAUL CIRCUMCISES TIMOTHY

Does this contradict what the Jerusalem Council decided? It was settled that circumcision was not required of Gentile converts, so why did Paul circumcise Timothy?

- The decision of the Jerusalem Council was that circumcision was not required for salvation, so Timothy was circumcised to make him fit to minister to Jews.

IT WAS STILL NECESSARY

We know Timothy's circumcision was not essential for salvation as Luke tells us it was **"because of the Jews who were in those places, since they all knew his father was a Greek."**

- Timothy's circumcision was not necessary for salvation, but it was necessary to open the door for him to share the gospel without being quickly dismissed by the Jews.

A LEADER IN THE MAKING

Timothy was a Believer when Paul brought him along on the second missionary journey and would go on to be a major part of the missionary team.

- Timothy would be mentioned in six of Paul's letters and is the recipient of two letters, with Paul considering Timothy his **"dearly loved and faithful child in the Lord"** and his **"true son in the faith"** (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 1:2).

SET OUT TO ACCOMPLISH PAUL'S PLANS

Paul, Silas, and their new assistant Timothy set out to visit all the areas visited on the first missionary journey as Paul had suggested to Barnabas (15:36).

- Luke tells us they **"traveled through the towns,"** sharing the decision of the Jerusalem Council, and **"the churches were strengthened in faith and grew daily in numbers."**

HIS PLANS (ACTS 16:6–10)

CHANGE OF PLANS

Their plan, enacted by Paul, was to travel to the other churches he had founded and then go into new territory, but **God had different plans for them.**

- It's not that it was wrong of Paul to want to preach the gospel in Asia Minor (Turkey). It just was not God's timing for him, so **he was forbidden.**

GOD'S PLANS ARE ALWAYS BIGGER AND BETTER

Once again, Paul wanted to go north and was prevented from doing so by the Holy Spirit, so they went down to Troas.

- While in Troas, God made Paul's next move clear in a vision. The vision revealed to Paul that they were to leave Asia Minor and go on the first ever missionary journey to Europe.

TRUE LIFE-CHANGING HELP

In the vision, Paul saw a Macedonian man pleading with him to **"cross over to Macedonia and help us!"**

- The best help we can offer someone is the gospel.** Relief and help can be given in other ways, but that help should be given in tandem with the gospel. Without the gospel, true life-changing help is not given.

THERE WAS A PURPOSE IN GOD SAYING NO!

Luke wrote, **"we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia."** The shift from "they" to "we" indicates that Luke had joined the missionary party in Troas.

- The Holy Spirit forbade them from going to Asia Minor because God wanted to give a continent to win for Jesus. They were forbidden to go to Bithynia because God wanted Luke to go.

THE FIRST EUROPEAN CONVERT (ACTS 16:11–15)

ARRIVING IN PHILIPPI

The team left Troas, "sailed straight for Samothrace" across the Aegean Sea, passed through Neapolis, and made their way to Philippi.

- Philippi was a sophisticated metropolitan area, known for its gold mines and school of medicine. It had a deep Roman connection due to being the site of Mark Antony's decisive victory in the second Roman civil war in 42 B.C.

"A GOD-FEARING WOMAN NAMED LYDIA"

There was no synagogue, so on the Sabbath they went to the shore by the river and sat down, discussing spiritual matters with the women who gathered there.

- Luke tells us about the first European convert who was a woman named Lydia, who dealt in very expensive purple cloth from the city of Thyatira.

GOD WANTS TO OPEN THE DOOR (2 PETER 3:9)

Before Lydia responded to the gospel that Paul preached, Luke tells us that **"the Lord opened her heart to respond."**

- Jesus spoke of God revealing Himself and His plan for redemption to all who have come to believe. In John 6:44 Jesus said, **"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."**

"Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened." (Matthew 7:7–8)

DIVINATION (ACTS 16:16–24)

PROFITING OFF DEMONIC FORTUNE-TELLING

While on their way to prayer, the men came across a demon-possessed woman who was given supernatural insight into the lives of others.

- We have no reason to doubt that the demon-possessed woman spoke truth. Not only did her owners make a large profit from her, but she truthfully testified that Paul and company were servants of God proclaiming salvation.

"I COMMAND YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS..."

Paul did not want the testimony of a demon, so he spoke to the demon and cast it out of her by the authority of Jesus Christ.

- Like the owners of the pigs that ran off a cliff after Jesus cast out demons (Mark 5:16–17), the owners of the once demon-possessed girl became angered at the loss of income.

"THE CROWD JOINED IN THE ATTACK"

Their accusers saying, "They are Jews," not only reveals the antisemitism in the area but also why Paul and Silas were imprisoned and not Luke and Timothy.

- The demon-possessed girl's owners brought them before the authorities on vague charges. Because the owners thought they were not citizens of Rome, they had no civil rights.

GOD WAS NOT FAR FROM THEM

Roman justice offered no concessions to non-citizens; no hearing, no trial, and no opportunity to defend themselves. Paul and Silas were stripped of their clothes, severely beaten, and thrown into the inner part of the prison with their feet in stocks.

- "The legs feel nothing in the stocks when the heart is in heaven"** (Tertullian).

HIS WAYS ARE BETTER

- God's timing and plans often differ from our plans (Isaiah 55:8–9).
- Our ability to understand God's plans is affected by a fallen, finite nature.
- We must trust God's leading every day and in every facet of our lives.
- Are we operating with a constant alertness of the Holy Spirit's leading?

ARE WE REMAINING OPEN?

- How do we respond when God's plans differ from ours?
- Do we view difficulties as opportunities for faith?
- What is God opening our hearts to today that we need to respond to?
- Are we open to receive and to respond to what God has planned?