



**Listening to and Ministering in the Holy Spirit
The Macedonian Call
Acts 15:40-16:18**

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Acts 15:40–16:2

“But Paul chose Silas, and left after being entrusted by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. 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.” (NASB 2020)



Why Silas? He had traveled back to Antioch with the team after the Jerusalem conference. And Paul got to know a bit more about Silas as they traveled together. He discovered that Silas, like Paul, grew up with a foot in two different worlds.

Silas, as a prophet which we learned about in Acts 15:32, was an encourager and exhorter effectively communicating the desires of the church in Jerusalem to those in Antioch. But we also find out later, that just like Paul, not only is Silas a Jew, but he is also a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37-38).

He stayed on in Antioch after the assigned tasks from James were completed (Acts 15:34). After the blow up with Barnabas concerning John Mark, Barnabas and John Mark went to Cyprus and Paul chose to have Silas replace Barnabas on the trip he was intending to go on.

So, with the approval of the church, they head north opting to travel by land first to the area Paul is originally from, Syria and Cilicia.

Paul's goal was to strengthen the churches and there were some churches in the area of Syria and Cilicia he most like founded. It was a logical first place to go.

Paul had been on a missionary trip before, not Silas. There are some things to learn and traveling by land through a familiar area allows Paul the opportunity and the time to provide the training Silas needs to help him be ready for what is coming once they get to Galatia.

This gives Paul also the time to make sure he and Silas are on the same page regarding the overall process to be followed as they travel. As they head out, the intent is to remain in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey, but that will all change while they are on the trip.

In all of Acts 16, there are three things which the team will learn it must engage in to be world changers. These three things we also wind up dealing with as well.

The first thing, in addition to ministering as they go, is to recruit others to join in the ministry. In other words, begin developing a group of like minded "disciples" to not only assist in the work but to have the work handed off to them at a later date.

We will see how this is done here in Acts 16:1-10.

The second thing that we will see in Acts 16:11-34 is the same thing we see as we go about ministering here in the last days. Problems. Expect them. We are busy taking territory from the enemy and as such spiritual warfare is always a given. Never engage thinking there will not be opposition to what we are doing for the Lord.

Paul, Silas and the team will be entering a part of the world that Satan thought was his and his alone. He is beginning to learn the full impact of what Jesus did on the cross and the intent to recover all of the nations in a reversal of what took place back in Genesis 11 is indeed on the agenda.

Paul, Silas and the team are evidence of that.

We too are working to establish ministry in a place that Satan thought he had locked down. Why so much trouble finding a building? Spiritual warfare. Satan does not want us here.

1 John 4:4

"You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world." (NASB 2020)



One more thing to remember as well.

Matthew 16:18

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (ESV)

Gates are defensive structures. “It is the gates of hell that are under assault—and they will not hold up against the Church. Hell will one day be Satan’s tomb.” (Heiser 2015, 285)

One more thing as well, as we expect there to be problems as we go forward with the Lord, those problems are also accompanied by His confirming love. Be on the look out for how He does that, it may seem like a coincidence but there is no such thing for those who are engaged in the work the Lord has called them to.

The third thing we can anticipate is encouraging other followers of Jesus Christ. As they watch us and how we handle the spiritual warfare and those problems and issues that arise, we are also given opportunities, through our response, to encourage others. Especially those who are new in the faith.

After leaving the familiar stomping grounds of Syria and Cilicia, Paul and Silas continue north crossing the Taurus Mountain range coming into southeastern Galatia. What was it that Paul wanted to do? He wanted to visit the churches planted earlier so the team goes to Derbe and to Lystra.

Paul would indeed remember his last visit to Lystra, he was stoned there the last time. But the ministry there also saw many come to faith in Christ.

We are now told of a young man, a follower of Jesus, there in Lystra, Timothy. He has an interesting family situation with a Jewish mother and a Greek father that we know very little about. Intermarriages like this would indeed occur among some Hellenistic Jewish families.

Timothy though was privileged to grow up in a believing home. On Paul’s first trip there twelve or so years earlier, Eunice and Lois apparently became followers of Jesus as did Eunice’s young son, Timothy.

2 Timothy 1:5

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” (ESV)

Was it possible that his father was a God fearer and as such refused circumcision for himself and his son? Possible but conjecture. It is evident however that Timothy grew up in a faithful Jewish home that became a faithful Christian home after Paul and Barnabas came to town twelve years or so earlier.

The church there took notice of Timothy and apparently commended this young man to Paul as someone they believed had been called of God.

“There is some debate as to whether Timothy’s status at this point was Jewish or Gentile by virtue of his parentage. Tannaitic sources counted as Jewish the son of a Jewish mother and a Gentile man, as many scholars note.” This may be one of the reasons Paul would use to convince this young man of his need for circumcision especially if he were to join the ministry. At least it would end the ambiguity religiously that might prevent some Jews from listening. (Keener 2014, 2317)

The one thing we do know from 2 Timothy is that this young man knew his Bible.



2 Timothy 3:14–15

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (ESV)

They were new followers in Christ, but Eunice and Lois knew the mission the Lord had given them with Timothy. They disciplined him, teaching him the word and demonstrating how to live day by day as an example for him to follow.

I have met and talked with lots of folks over the years who are looking for the really big ministry work to engage in.

But for many of us, the most important work we could ever engage in lives in our homes. And it doesn't end after they leave and go out on their own. It is a privilege to also be able to feed into the lives of grandchildren and help them also to understand who the Lord is.

I've said this several times before, but for the first 12 years of my life, no one in our home knew Jesus at all. But on one side of the family, there were believing grandparents and great grandparents who were consistent with their love as well as their testimony.

I had never seen my parents read the word or pray before a meal, but I saw my grandparents and uncle do so all the time.

When visiting in the summer, I would want to go outside but tough to do in the summer when it is pushing 110 so I would stay inside and listen to whatever grandma had on the radio. Usually, Bible study and Bible teaching. Their house was calm and quiet and filled with love, but back home, not so much.

I was learning what it meant to be in a Christian home. My grandparents and great grandparents are a big reason why I am a believer in Jesus Christ.

As I said, many times your biggest and most impactful ministry, is in your home.

Timothy has been invited to join the team. To do so, he submits to circumcision which is more of a missionary strategy here than a concession to the Judaizers. Paul would later say this to the folks in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 9:19–20

“For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. **To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.**” (ESV)

Don't take this as an excuse to go and become a legalist. Titus was a gentile, and he was not circumcised at all (Galatians 2:3). In order to effectively reach Jews, Timothy, who in their eyes would be Jewish, had a potential block to ministry removed.

I know of a couple who went into the jungles of Panama to reach a tribe for Jesus and then also translate the Bible into their language. The young men in the village kept bothering the man's wife basically asking her out on dates. When he finally learned that married women in that culture had a ring in their nose to signify that, she took a removable earring from her ear and put it in her nose and was left alone.



Missionary work, especially that which is serious cross cultural sometimes makes demands that most of us would never do, but for those wanting to reach a group for Jesus, there is a desire to remove barriers like someone who is Jewish but uncircumcised would be.

Paul did this to remove the argument. Certainly circumcision had no bearing on Timothy's salvation, but the rite was performed so that the ministry of Timothy with the Jews would not be handicapped. (McGee 1997, 582)

Timothy joins the team, and they continue their ministry in Galatia.

Acts 16:4–5

"Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the ordinances for them to follow which had been determined by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily." (NASB 2020)

The letter that James had written covering the decisions of the Jerusalem Council was intended for Antioch as well as Syria and Cilicia. But Paul and Silas decided this was an important item to discuss so they continued to teach this even in the churches in Galatia. This not only strengthened the churches, but they also began seeing more saved.

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." (NASB 2020)

Paul has a desire to teach the word to the lost, but the Holy Spirit tells him, "not here." He wanted to go elsewhere in Asia Minor, but the door was closed. I know what that closed door looks like, it isn't fun to be doing what the Spirit wants you to, and you believe this is the next step and the Spirit says "no."

I finally graduated from college with a degree in History and was ready to go to seminary. I really believed that was where the Lord wanted me to go next. I applied and was accepted and was in the parking lot ready to go in and register. But I felt uneasy about it. There was no money to go and even though I believed the Lord would provide, He hadn't. So there in the parking lot, I asked the Lord one more time if this was what He wanted, and for the first time in my life, I heard the Holy Spirit verbally. He said NO. So, no it was.

That was hard for me to understand but it was so clear that was what He wanted.

If we are looking to Him for guidance and direction, He will indeed do so, and we have to be fully prepared for the no as well as the yes.

We are in Hobe Sound because of the Spirit saying yes. Right now, this is where He wants us. Could he move us? Always possible but not something I see right now.

But there is nothing currently open for us as a place to lease and do church in, yes that is true, and yes there are properties available if we were to leave Hobe Sound, but right now, the door is closed to do that. So, we wait on the Lord and try not to help Him too.

Because of no, Paul and the team continued to do ministry there in Phrygia and Galatia. As the team continued traveling north and west, they wanted to move south into Asia, Western Turkey today, several times, but the Lord would not let them, and they received a second closed door.



As a result, the team continued to move forward passing through Mysia and coming to Troas on the coast. Troas is close to ancient Troy there on the eastern side of the Aegean Sea. Every time the team wanted to move south, they were prevented from doing so. Now they are on the coast and most likely wondering if the trip was over and time to go back to Antioch. What's next?

The team is in Troas, and as they have been doing daily up to this point they continue to wait on the Lord. Yes, they are indeed sharing the word as they move along, but there is no stopping and doing ministry as Paul and Barnabas had done on the first trip. There is no place else to walk from here. The team is waiting on and looking to the Lord for where to next.

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.” (NASB 2020)

All of the prayers for guidance and direction have now been answered. This is not a no, but a go. Paul has a vision while sleeping and sees a man in the vision saying “come to Macedonia and help us.” Paul wanted to take the gospel to areas that had never heard, he thought that would be in Asia, nope, Europe.

There used to be the idea that anyone called into ministry, would have a vision, a call type of moment, a vision. That really is not a prerequisite. Paul wanted to minister in Asia and was having closed door after closed door. The team was praying for what or where to go next, and this prayer was answered. Macedonia.

He was not the first or the last Jesus follower who was redirected to something else the Spirit wanted to do.

William Carey was interested in going to the South Seas but ended up in India. Adoniram Judson was expelled from India and ended up in Burma after trying to go elsewhere. David Livingstone was waiting to get into China but the Opium War hindered, and he went to Africa instead. (Olson and Fanning 2013, 75)

Paul has been redirected. He wanted to strengthen churches, but the Holy Spirit had other ideas.

Something else we see here in verse 10 as well. Dr. Luke has now joined the team. “Luke’s use of pronouns changes from “they” to “we”. Luke has joined Paul’s party. Luke, however, does not tag along as a disinterested journalist or historian. He serves as a fellow member in Paul’s missionary team who affirms the mission: “God had called us to preach the gospel to them” (v 10).” (Mohler Jr. 2019, 49)

Not only was the team guided to Troas by getting a no to ministering elsewhere, but they were to pick up another member for the team there, Luke.

At the time, Paul probably had no idea of the greatness of God’s purpose. God wanted to give him a continent for Jesus, to give him a personal doctor, and to give all of us the man whom God would use to write more of the New Testament than anyone else did. God knows what He is doing when he says, “No.” (Guzik 2013, Ac 16:9-10)

God does indeed answer our prayers, just as He did for Paul and the team, yes, no, not now. I have found that no, means that He has other ideas that make mine look rather feeble.

God told Paul and team no because they needed to open up a foreign land, Macedonia. A place that Satan thought he had all to himself, but God was indeed retaking what belongs to him and He was make



this evident by doing so in the ministry of Paul. Paul would understand that as the apostle to the gentiles, he was taking back the disinherited nations of Genesis 11.

It is absolutely clear, though, that the Spirit wished the gospel to move into Europe (Macedonia and points west) immediately, not later. (Osborne 2019, 294)

The reaction to the vision, obedience. God was no longer only interested in their Jerusalem; He is interested in all the nations. They immediately set out for Macedonia playing catch up to the Spirit. Sometimes, that is exactly what it feels like to walk with the Lord. We pray for and ask for Him to move among His people, bring revival, pour out your Spirit Lord, and revive us. Then He does. Catch up. Your step out in faith saying who knows what the Spirit wants to do and for a time, very slow and very manageable, but then, boom. Catch up.

When I was praying about where to go to school, I really felt the Spirit was wanting me at Biola, which I could not afford, and dad would not help with. It was a Bible school after all. The Lord said yes, He supplied a scholarship and the athletic department wanted me on the track team and they also supplied a scholarship. All in about two weeks time. Boom. Catch up.

They had been praying, and doors had been closed. They did not stop praying and now, just like that, a door is open and the now four-man team moves immediately in obedience to what their understanding of the guidance of the Spirit was.

The Holy Spirit still ministers today too and many times in miraculous ways. We think way too small most of the time and won't let God be God. We tend to limit Him because of unbelief.

I struggle with what it is God wants to do and as such find myself limiting Him even how I pray. We should not be limiting God. Learn to pray for BIG things.

We are praying for a building and looking forward to what He has. There are indeed some great locations here in Hobe Sound for Calvary Chapel to be in, He is the one who will have to make that happen. And He will in His time. Nothing is too small or too big to pray about.

We can never have too big a conception of God, and the more scientific knowledge (in whatever field) advances, the greater becomes our idea of His vast and complicated wisdom. Yet, unless we are to remain befogged and bewildered and give up all hope of ever knowing God as a Person, we have to accept His own planned focusing of Himself in a human being, Jesus Christ. (Phillips 2024, 120-121)

Hebrews 12:1-2

"Therefore, since we also have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let's rid ourselves of every obstacle and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let's run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking only at Jesus, the originator and perfecter of the faith**, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (NASB 2020)

We spent some time talking about this recently in Psalm 27. David had personally experienced who God is and then writes about Him extracting three keys for us to keep us from fear.

Psalm 27:1-2

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?" When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell." (NKJV)



God was not small per David; He was God and David allowed for God to be God. We should too as we look to Him to guide us.

Here is a challenge for all of us, let's all resign, today, from being God. Yes, we are all still trying to run our own lives, we need to resign. Adrian Rogers gives us a hint where we arrive at post resignation.

We need to let God be God. Just go ahead and let God be God. There are certain things you will never understand until you get to Heaven, if you understand them then. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God" (Deuteronomy 29:29). That's God's sovereign will. God is sovereign. (Rogers 2017, Ac 9:1-22)

When His guidance becomes clear, obedience is then what is required. For Paul and team, that meant immediately.

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." (NASB 2020)

What does obedience look like. Let's look at this in real time.

Last night Paul had a dream which was an answer to prayer. This morning, he related it to the team and after prayer, all agreed this was what the Lord wanted to happen.

They find a boat sailing that direction and leave that day and surprise, favorable winds.

That evening they stop at Samothrace and spend the night. The next day, after a brief stop at Neapolis, they go about ten more miles up the coast to Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia. They sailed 156 miles in two days because God made the way clear with favorable winds.

Acts 16:13

"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." (NASB 2020)

What is this all about? Remember, the pattern that Paul and Barnabas used was on the first Sabbath in a new location, go to the synagogue and teach. But now they are in Macedonia and there is no synagogue. This is a serious Roman town where many legionnaires had retired over the past 100 years or so.

There is no synagogue in Philippi, but there might be enough Jews who are interested in praying. they hoped to connect with a minyan. (This term usually refers to a gathering of at least ten Jewish men, the minimal requirement for the communal prayers. Of course, a minyan is not always possible in smaller communities, as seems to be the case in Philippi.) There was no synagogue in which to hold services, but per the Mishna, the next-best place would be by a body of water that could serve as a natural mikveh pool (Tractate Mikvaot 5.4). (Kasdan 2022, 123)

In the absence of a Synagogue, Paul and the team go to the next best location and meet a group of Jewish women who apparently went there for prayer including those who were God-fearers as well. This means there were not 10 Jewish men in Philippi to enable a Synagogue there.

Leave it to Paul to take advantage of any and all opportunities.



Acts 16:14–15

“A woman named Lydia was listening; she was a seller of purple fabrics from the city of Thyatira, and a worshiper of God. 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.” (NASB 2020)

The first person saved in Macedonia is a businesswoman, not a Jew but a God fearer along the same lines as someone we met earlier, Cornelius the Centurian. Lydia is a seller of purple fabrics which means she had a very select clientele and most likely rich.

She is the first Christian businesswoman we see in the scriptures, she is also the first Gentile believer in Europe and also the first believer to open up her home to be used as a worship center. It also appears that she is the only one who responded to the message Paul gave and came to Christ at that first meeting. In fact, her entire household came to Christ and in this case that may mean her servants and employees as well as family members.

Paul and Silas are seeing and experiencing the first serious cross-cultural impact and they will indeed see it become even more of an influence in the church. Philippi is very Roman, but some towns will be very Greek.

Roman society offered a higher degree of liberation to women than Greek society, and by the first century AD many women, particularly those with wealth and high status, could initiate divorce (which was frowned upon but not uncommon), own property, and inherit money, but these would be exceedingly rare among those in a lower socioeconomic position. (Bowes 2021, 14)

Lydia being a businesswoman in Philippi would not be abnormal for the community.

She is a God fearer and as such would be also aware of some of the cultural struggles women who are Jewish, and there are a few there in town, would be struggling with.

In general, Roman women found non-Roman religion more attractive than did Roman men, and Gentile women proved more attracted to Judaism than men were. This was, presumably, partly because women did not have to undergo circumcision but also because they were less bound by status obligations of household and civic cults. (Keener 2014, 2390-2391)

Lydia and her now converted household form the basis for the church in Philippi. She offered hospitality to the team, and they stayed with her while ministering in Philippi.

Using Lydia's home as a base of operations, Paul and the team began doing evangelism there in Philippi which included a continuation of going to the place of prayer on the Sabbath. There was no synagogue for the team to be kicked out of, so this became a rather regular function for them. But of course, Satan couldn't let that go on unnoticed now could he.

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 repeatedly, 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.” (NASB 2020)

And now we see more of the layers in the Greco Roman world there in Philippi.



This new person we are introduced to is a slave; a woman and we have no idea what her name is. But she is demon possessed and that has been turned into a profit-making opportunity by her owner. She was an oracle, one who would tell others their fortune, for a price. Some who do this today are charlatans, some are indeed possessed of demons. As followers of Christ, we are not to participate in anything they are involved in.

In the Greek, “the phrase πνεῦμα πύθωνα (pneuma pythōna) means either a “spirit, namely, a Python” or “a Pythonian spirit.” Either way, a spirit of divination is intended. Here social status is made clear by the fact that she serves masters. This woman is portrayed as inspired by the Pythian god, Apollo. (Bock 2007, 535)

Just as Paul was confronted by demons in Bar-Jesus, he is again confronted by intelligent evil in this woman. Unlike Bar-Jesus, this time Paul turns to exorcism.

How many days she followed them and proclaimed her false gospel we do not know, but it does appear Paul has a breaking point.

Acts 16:18

“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.” (NASB 2020)

The forms of the Greek verbs translated followed and shouting indicate that this was a continuous action. Note also the fact that this is made explicit in the beginning of verse 18. One can, therefore, translate “she kept following Paul and us and kept shouting” or “she continually followed Paul and us and kept shouting.” (Newman and Nida 1972, 317)

Dr. Luke is being kind when he tells us Paul was annoyed. What this does though is sets up a power spiritual confrontation. Satan uses this as a means to let the team know they are going to be confronted as they work to evangelize the region.

Paul exorcises the demon out of the woman, and that kicks off persecution. We will pick up here next time.

The message Paul was telling those at the place of prayer and elsewhere is the same message we bring today.

Believe in Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives



generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” (NLT)

ABC's of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

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