

**1183 Paul's second missionary journey, visions, annoyed, infant baptism - Acts(16)1-40  
(by Whirlwind)**

**First, let us look at Timothy, a uncircumcised Jew whom Paul met during his second missionary journey. Because he was to preach the gospel, Paul required him to be circumcised, whereas Titus, a Gentile, was not circumcised. We have discussed this point. Second, let us look at how the Holy Spirit led Paul to Macedonia through a vision. Third, we spoke of Lydia at the place of prayer; she was the first fruit of faith that Paul reaped in Europe. Fourth, we discussed in detail how Paul, out of annoyance, cast out the evil spirit from the slave girl. We saw that he learned not to casually curse others in the name of Jesus Christ. We also discussed the relevant passages about Elisha, seeing yet another example of "what God tells us through the Bible is consistent." Fifth, we mentioned the slave girl's masters, who, for profit, had Paul and Silas thrown into prison and treated as serious criminals. Sixth, we discussed how they prayed, sang hymns, and praised God in prison, leading the jailer's entire household to believe in God, and we also addressed a controversial topic related to infant baptism. Finally, we briefly discussed how the magistrate released the two men from prison and asked them to leave the city.**

**Please note that this article is an expansion of the topicwise Bible study held on Sunday (3/29/26). Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. If this article refers previous articles, they can all be found on our website, '<https://a-christian-voice.com/>'; click on 'Understanding Spiritual Life'.**

**1. Paul's encounter with Timothy during his second missionary journey**

**"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, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. 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. 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. So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily."(Acts 16:1-5)**

**Timothy was already a highly regarded disciple before Paul arrived. Although his mother was a Jewish woman who believed in the Lord, his father was a Greek; therefore, he was considered an uncircumcised Jew. This is the first mention of him. Although Paul knew full well that circumcision was not necessary for salvation, he had him circumcised for the sake of the ministry, since he intended to take him along on a mission. Paul made it very clear: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."(Galatians 5:6)**

**The unnecessary nature of circumcision is also evident in another passage: "Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I**

**preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage."(Galatians 2:1-4) Paul did not require Titus, a Gentile, to be circumcised. In other words, "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation."(Galatians 6:15) "for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh."(Philippians 3:3)**

**The translation in the Chinese Union Version that reads "the Spirit of God" the same as here, is incorrect and does not align with the original text in the Strong's Concordance. Although another original manuscript version matches the Chinese Union Version's translation, we can determine its inaccuracy from another passage: "God is spirit (G4151, should be Spirit, since Trinity), and those who worship Him must worship in spirit (G4151) and truth."(John 4:24) We see that the same word is used in the Greek text; one must examine the context to determine whether it is capitalized or lowercase. Incidentally, the translation of "truth" in the Chinese Union Version as "honesty" is also incorrect since it's clear in this verse: "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."(John 4:23) If someone were to tell you honestly, "My god is not the Triune God, but a false god like Guanyin," would God want such a person to worship Him? Apparently, there is no such problem in English translation.**

**"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."(Acts 16:4) So Paul knew very clearly that this was merely a human choice, not something from the Holy Spirit, but he also knew, "Pursue peace with all men, ..." (Hebrews 12:14). Unless absolutely necessary, he would not argue. "So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily."(Acts 16:5)**

**Another instance where he had to speak out is found in this passage: "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? "We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor."(Galatians 2:11-18)**

He had to speak out because it was contrary to the truth of the gospel. If he had not spoken out, his efforts would have been in vain; therefore, he said, "It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain."(Galatians 2:2) Although Peter was the leading apostle, he still spoke plainly before everyone. Even so, Peter knew he was right, for he said, "...our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."(2 Peter 3:15–16)

## **2. The Holy Spirit Led Paul to Macedonia through a vision**

"They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been 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 permit them; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 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." 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. So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; 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."(Acts 16:6–12)

We see that the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Jesus—led Paul and his companion to take the first step; when they made a mistake, He corrected them through a vision. This is what is meant by: "Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. Your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left."(Isaiah 30:20–21) Notice that it speaks of a voice from behind.

They obeyed God and went to Philippi in Macedonia, Europe, where they began their missionary work. Please note that some teach that without the Holy Spirit's guidance, one should remain where they are; this is clearly wrong and does not fit this situation. Therefore, discernment is required—we must understand that sometimes God takes the initiative to correct us in this way. If we take the first step based on our own understanding and make a mistake, and God does not correct us at that moment, we must repent immediately upon realizing it. Remember, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(1 John 1:9).

## **3. Lydia at the Place of Prayer**

"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. 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. 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 (G3849, constrained) upon us." (Acts 16:13–15)

In places where there were synagogues, Paul and Silas would go to the synagogue on the Sabbath, as the Scripture says, "Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures."(Acts 17:1-2) So it is clear that there was no synagogue in Philippi at that time, but there was a place where women gathered to pray. Among them was Lydia, a woman from outside the city who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying, and she and her household were baptized, becoming the first fruit of Paul's ministry in Europe. Consequently, some have suggested that the church in Philippi began in her home; however, if God had deemed this significant, He would have explicitly stated it in the Bible. Indeed, this is a matter of principle—we must be careful not to inadvertently show disrespect toward God without even realizing it. Please note that the New Testament mentions Lydia only twice; we will look at the second reference to her shortly.

It was likely Silas who baptized them, for Paul said, "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void."(1 Corinthians 1:14–17) Although Paul was very clear about the purpose for which he was sent by the Lord, it is somewhat similar to what this passage says: (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were)."(John 4:2) Logically speaking, it is possible that he did not recall, since the Bible does not explicitly state this, and we cannot be 100% certain; we can only say it is likely.

However, this is not important. What is important is that they were baptized and came to the Lord, so they asked them and constrained (G3849) them to stay. Please note that this word "constrained" (G3849) appears only twice; the other instance is here: "And they (the two disciples on the road to Emmaus) approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. But they urged (G3849) Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them."(Luke 24:28–29) They did not know at that time that it was the Lord Jesus; they were indeed urging Him to stay, so the meaning of "urged (G3489)" is very clear.

#### 4. Paul, annoyed, casts out the demon from the slave-girl

"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 (plural) much profit by fortune-telling. 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." She continued doing this

for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed (G1278), 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."(Acts 16:16-18)

The slave girl's words were entirely correct, but their source was wrong. This shows that merely listening to human words is not enough. In fact, "No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, . ."(2 Corinthians 11:14-15) Though we are not worthy of being attacked directly by Satan, we are often attacked by his servants, so we must discern.

This went on for many days, so Paul, in the name of Jesus Christ, immediately drove the demon out. The reason was that he was annoyed (G1278), and God still heeded his words on this occasion. Note that nothing like this ever happened again, for he learned that even in his own weakness, he must not casually invoke the name of Jesus Christ to curse others, for God would hear him. Note that the word for "annoyed (G1278)" appears only twice in the New Testament; the other instance is in this passage: "being greatly disturbed (G1278) because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening."(Acts 4:2-3)

If you still doubt this claim, consider a similar incident that occurred only once in the Old Testament. The text says, "Then he (Elisha) went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up by the way, young lads (H6996, little; H5288, children) came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead!" When he looked behind him and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore up forty-two lads of their number."(2 Kings 2:23-24)

Another version of the original text refers to "young men," which is the same as the "young lads or little children" mentioned here. Those young lads did indeed mock him, but from either a human or a divine perspective, such a sin would not normally warrant death. Yet he cursed them in the name of the Lord, and God had only recently promised him a double portion of Elijah's spirit (cf. 2 Kings 2:9-12). We also see that he indeed possessed a double portion of the Spirit, for in addition to the miracles he performed, even his bones could raise the dead. As the Scripture says, "Elisha died, and they buried him. Now the bands of the Moabites would invade the land in the spring of the year. As they were burying a man, behold, they saw a marauding band; and they cast the man into the grave of Elisha. And when the man touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood up on his feet."(2 Kings 13:20-21) However, he likely was not buried in a deep grave; otherwise, the dead man could not have touched his bones. Thus, we can indeed deduce certain unstated details from the text. Here, we do not know why this happened, for "When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"(2 Kings 13:14) He was the chariots and horsemen of Israel!

Please note that the original text does not contain the word “some” as in Chinese Union Version. Why were not all the young lads, yet a sufficient number—forty-two of them—torn to pieces? From a human perspective, it seems likely that some could have escaped the claws of the two mother bears. More importantly, if this had happened to everyone, the Bible would have explicitly stated it, since the Bible even explicitly records answered prayers. Based on the principle that “what God tells us through the Bible is consistent,” if it had been everyone, the Bible would have made that clear.

As for why those forty-two boys were the ones who deserved to die, rather than all of them, the Bible does not explicitly state it, and we cannot fathom it; we can only believe that God has His own reasons. Respect God and do not speculate recklessly, for such things cannot be fathomed. However, this incident occurred only once, because Elisha learned that even in his moments of weakness, he must not casually curse others in God’s name. Since God had granted him the double spiritual power, God truly would heed his words. Thus, in the cases of both Elisha and Paul, we have another example of “what God tells us through the Bible being consistent.”

Finally, it should be noted that there are people who believe Elisha at that time was a foreshadowing of the resurrected Jesus Christ, and that he was not to be mocked. This is a mistaken notion, for others also mocked him at the same time yet did not die.

#### **5. The slave-girl's masters having Paul and Silas thrown into prison as serious criminals**

**"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, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.” 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. 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.”(Acts 16:19–24)**

We note that the slave-girl had multiple masters; clearly, those who profited from her were involved. Moreover, because there were so many of them, it was easy to stir up a great commotion, causing the magistrates to heed their cries. This led to Paul and Silas being flogged and thrown into prison, confined to the inner cell and shackled with wooden stocks, treated as serious criminals.

#### **6. They prayed and sang hymns praising God in prison, leading the jailer’s entire household to faith**

**"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the**

foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" And he called 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?" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord 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 rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household."(Acts 16:25–34)

The Scripture clearly describes how Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God while in prison, as well as the process by which the jailer and his entire household came to believe in God. Please read the passage for yourself. In fact, this is much like what some have said: no matter what difficulties one faces, as long as one is able to move, one should crawl if necessary to come before God. Of course, there are times when one is physically unable to move—for example, after certain surgeries—so this does not refer solely to physical ability. As long as one retains one's mental faculties, it is always possible to stand before God in spirit.

Here we will discuss the controversial topic of infant baptism, because some use this verse to argue that infants can be baptized: "...immediately he (the jailer) was baptized, he and all his household."(Acts 16:33). They claim that since the Bible does not explicitly state otherwise, "his household" must include infants. If we examine other scriptures, we will find that there are no infants among those who were baptized, and even in the case of answered prayers, the Bible would explicitly state it. From the perspective that "what God tells us through the Bible being consistent," if there were infants among those who belonged to him, the Bible would have explicitly stated it. Therefore, those who advocate infant baptism, and parents who wish to have their infants baptized, should repent before God. Parents must not use the excuse that "everyone else does it, so we should too." They must realize that just because everyone does something does not make it right; what these people receive is merely earthly honor. At that age, infants understand nothing and cannot decide for themselves whether to be baptized; such baptism has no meaning whatsoever.

#### **7. The magistrate releases the two men from prison and asks them to leave the city**

"Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace." But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out." The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. They went out of the prison and

**entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed."(Acts 16:35–40)**

**Paul did not always invoke his status as a Roman citizen; he didn't do so when he was arrested. But now he felt it necessary to tell them he was a Roman, which was against the law to put him in jail that way. So the magistrate had no choice but "...came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city."(Acts 16:39) The fact that the two men left prison and went to Lydia's house to see the brothers indicates that the brothers were meeting at Lydia's house at that time; this is the second mention of Lydia in the New Testament. Through this release from prison and their eventual departure, he not only comforted the brothers but also set an example by demonstrating, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."(Romans 12:18)**