

Acts 16 notes

Hallel Fellowship (<http://hallel.info>)

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All passages from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

Acts 15:33–41 — Paulos and Bar-Nabbas took the Acts 15 ruling to Antioch, later deciding to revisit the congregations visited on the first trip. They parted ways because Bar-Nabbas wanted to take along his cousin Yokhanan Mark, who left them on the first trip. Bar-Nabbas took Mark to Cyprus, and Paulos took along Silas to Syria and Cilicia in the southeast area of modern Turkey.

- After a while in Antioch, Paulos and Bar-Nabbas felt a call to “return and care for” those congregations to whom they originally “proclaimed the word of the Lord” on the first trip for the purpose of knowing, literally, “how they hold.”
 - The literal Greek is “proclaimed the word of the Lord, how they hold.”
 - By “hold” combined with “return and care for,” the meaning seems to be a trip to determine how the congregations were “holding onto,” “gripping” or “owning” the word proclaimed to them¹ and help them do so.
- *Silas* is thought to be Greek version of the Aramaic שִׁילָה *Sh'ilah*, which comes from the Hebrew שְׂאִילָה *Sha'ul*², which means “asked for.” That may be another reason why Sha'ul went by Paulos, who couldn't have asked for a better right-hand man during his missions.
 - It is thought to be the Greek form of the Latin name *Silvanus*, a name both Paulos and Petros mention in their letters (1st Thess. 1:1; 2nd Thess. 1:1; 1st Pet. 5:12). In rabbinical writings, the Latin name is transliterated into Hebrew as סִילְוָנִי *Silvani*.³
 - Because of the mentions of Silvanus with Timothy in the letters to the congregation at Thessalonica, another close travel companion with Paulos.

Acts 16:1–3 — Paul visits Derbe and Lystra and meets a well-known disciple named Timothy. Paul circumcises him before taking him along on the rest of the journey.

- Timothy's name (Τιμόθεος) means “valued of God.”⁴
- Was Timothy a Greek by his father or a Jew by his mother?
 - Timothy was of Israel by birth through his mother, regardless that his father was of the nations (a Greek).
 - Some think the Bible delineates ancestral ties to Israel based on paternal lineage.
 - God calls for a census of Israel “by their families, by their fathers' houses” (Num. 1:2).
 - The genealogies in the Tanakh only rarely mention the women.
 - Ancient accounts show that lineage through the mother was as important or more so.
 - “Shecaniah the son of Yehiel, one of the sons of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. So now let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.” (Ezra 10:2–3)
 - Ruth converts to the worship of the God of Israel, and she is mentioned in Messiah Yeshua's genealogy.
- Why did Paul circumcise Timothy when he taught against circumcision? To pander to the Jews?
 - Timothy wasn't a Torah-ignorant pagan; he knew the Tanakh.

“... from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Messiah Yeshua.” (2 Tim. 3:15)

 - His father should have circumcised him, but his father was a Greek.
 - His mother didn't follow Zipporah's lead and circumcise him when her husband failed to do so.
 - The local congregation leaders failed to circumcise him.
 - Titus was of Greek birth and not compelled to be circumcised at conversion (Gal. 2:1–3; Acts 15:1–2).

1 Fredrick William Danker, ed. “ἔχω.” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, Third Edition* (BDAG). The University of Chicago Press, 2000.

2 “Σιλᾶς.” BDAG.

3 “Σιλουανός.” BDAG.

4 “Τιμόθεος.” *New American Standard Greek Lexicon*.

Acts 16:4–11 — Paulos, Silas, Timothy, Luke (use of “we”) and the others travel through many cities they visited on the first trip in what is modern-day Turkey. Paul sees a vision of a Macedonian man calling him to come to him, so they go through Greece.

- Places
 - Lycaonia — a province south of Galatia; chief towns were Iconium, Lystra and Derbe
 - Derbe — 20 miles from Lystra
 - Lystra — Lystrans spoke Lyconian and Phrygian as well as Greek and Latin. Titus was from Derbe or Lystra.
 - Galatia
 - Iconium — “In the apostolic period, Iconium was one of the chief cities in the southern part of the Roman province Galatia.” They spoke Phrygian.⁵
 - Asia — Paul was prevented from entering this province, located in northwestern modern Turkey
 - Phrygia — Descended from the Hittite empire, the country in Roman times “was divided into two parts, one of which was known as Galatian Phrygia, and the other as Asian Phrygia, because it was a part of the Roman province of Asia.”⁶
 - included the cities of Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis
 - Mysia — a province in the northwest corner of the province of Asia
 - Thyatira — a city on the borders of Lydia and Mysia
 - Bithynia
 - Troas — the chief port of Mysia
 - Named after ancient Troy, which was four miles north of the city.
 - Macedonia — a Roman province north of Greece
 - Samothrace — an island in the Aegean Sea
 - Neapolis — the sea port of Philippi, which was 10 miles away
 - Philippi — capital of the province of Macedonia; a Roman colony, which had troops stationed there
- Why were Paulos and his companions “forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia” (Acts 16:6)?

Acts 16:12–40 — The apostles arrive in Phillipi, where they meet a congregation of women led by Lydia and are jailed for casting out a heckling demon in a fortune-telling slave girl.

- “on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside” (Acts 16:13)
 - These believers were in a city with no synagogue, but they were meeting on Shabbat as a congregation anyway.
 - Synagogues often were built by streams or rivers to ease the construction of mikvehs with “living water.”⁷
 - Josephus makes note that in places rocked by persecution, Jews set apart places of prayer — *προσευχή* *proseuche* (4335) — outside, such as a seashore (*Antiq.* 14:258).
 - In AD 49 emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome. Phillipi was a Roman colony and the capital of the province of Macedonia.⁸
 - Any synagogue building and minyan of men in Phillipi before the expulsion was gone.
 - This may explain the quick imprisonment of the apostles once they challenged the pagan powers.
- The lack of formal organization is evidenced by Lydia being the congregational leader in Phillipi and that the only congregants described were women (Acts 16:13).
- Demons can tell the truth — “These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation’ ” (Acts 16:17) — but do so in a way to bring scorn.
 - Should we be careful of those who are saying true things but are doing so in a way that brings scorn or confusion upon the words of God?
 - Would people become confused if seemingly true words of God were coming out of an agent for God’s enemies?
 - Should we watch out for saying the right things in the wrong way?
- “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25)
 - What does this teach us about one of the meanings for suffering?
 - What should our attitude be when we face challenges in life?

5 “Iconium.” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. 1915.

6 “Phrygia.” ISBE.

7 David Stern. “Acts 16.” *Jewish New Testament Commentary*.

8 “Phillipi.” *Easton Bible Dictionary*.

- “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’ ” (Acts 16:37)
 - Was Paulos being arrogant?
 - Was this a testimony for the Philippians who had been persecuting Jews under Claudius’ edict?