

27 May 2025

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

“Paul's second missionary journey”

Acts 16:6-15

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithyn'ia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedo'nia was standing beseeching him and saying, “Come over to Macedo'nia and help us.” And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedo'nia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the leading city of the district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days; and on the sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul. And when she was baptized, with her household, she besought us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

In the verses preceding this passage, we read that Paul and Barnabas, together with their companions, went about telling the Christian communities in various cities the decision made by the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 16:4). This brought peace and clarity on this controversial point, since it was decided that Gentiles could attain salvation without having to fulfil all the Jewish precepts. At the beginning of the second missionary journey, which would take the apostles back to the churches that had been formed during their first journey, a serious dispute arose between Paul and Barnabas, which ended up separating them (Acts 15:39). While Barnabas sailed to Cyprus, Paul set out with Silas for the churches in Syria and Cilicia (vv. 39b-41). They also arrived in Derbe and Lystra, where they conveyed the resolutions of the apostles and strengthened the faith of the churches (Acts 16:1,4-5). But then, as we hear in today's passage, Paul and

Silas were unable to carry on with their plan as they had intended. On this occasion, the obstacle was not hostile Jews or Greeks, but the Holy Spirit, who had other plans for them and closed the doors twice. We see here that it is the Holy Spirit who guides the mission, having found willing collaborators in Paul and Silas. Through a vision, He sent them to Macedonia. This was a very important step for the mission that followed, as it was the first stop in what is now Europe. For many centuries, the message of the Gospel found fertile ground here, and this continent was decisive in spreading the faith throughout the world. In Philippi, they met a woman named Lydia, who, after listening to the apostles, was baptised with her whole family and welcomed them into her home. But persecution soon came upon them in this city as well. The reason is described in the following verses:

“As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and us, crying, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” And this she did for many days. But Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; and when they had brought them to the magistrates they said, “These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice.” (Acts 16:16-21).

We see, then, that on this occasion it was the loss of the profits that the owners received through that slave that led them to persecute the apostles, having incited the people and the magistrates against them. After seizing the apostles, they threw them into prison (v. 23). It was there that God intervened in such a way that even the jailer was converted. Let us listen to the account:

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and every one’s fetters were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, “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 brought them

out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" And 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 and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God." (Acts 16:25-34)

Meditation on the day's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/sin-justice-and-judgement/>