

CHAPTER 6

SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

New personnel for the mission

When Paul and Barnabas decided to go on a second mission and revisit the churches they had started, there was a strong “irritation” between them as to whether they should take John Mark (note Luke’s honesty in Acts 15:36-40). Mark had forsaken the first mission, and Paul did not want to risk harming the second one by taking him again. On the other hand, Barnabas wanted to give his cousin Mark another chance. In the end they divided, and there were two missions: Barnabas and Mark to Cyprus, and Paul and Silas to Galatia.

Paul and Silas began by traveling westward through the cities of southern Galatia, preaching and delivering the letter from the Jerusalem Council (Acts 16:4). They preached in Derbe and in Lystra. In Lystra they met the disciple Timothy, who was half Jewish (through his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois), and who had been trained early in the Scriptures (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15). Timothy desired to accompany them, as John Mark had done earlier. Since Timothy was part Jewish, Paul had him circumcised--not as a moral good, but as an expedient to help with the mission among the Jews (Acts 16:1-3). It is interesting to note Paul’s different actions regarding Timothy and Titus (Gal 2:3-5).

Timothy had a long and fruitful association with Paul. Here is a brief summary of his life:

- 1) Godly Jewish mother and grandmother (2 Tim 1:5); Greek father (Acts 16:1)
- 2) Possibly converted by Paul in Lystra during the first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23; 1 Tim 1:2, 18)
- 3) Circumcised by Paul on second missionary journey, becomes Paul’s assistant (Acts 16:1-3)
- 4) Ordained by Paul and the presbytery (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6)
- 5) With Paul during second missionary journey in Corinth (Acts 18:5)

- 6) Five years later, with Paul during third missionary journey in Ephesus (Acts 19:22)
- 7) During third missionary journey, sent to Corinth, to Macedonia, then with Paul in Corinth (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor 1:1, 19; Rom 16:21)
- 8) During third missionary journey, with Paul on return trip in Troas (Acts 20:3-6)
- 9) With Paul during first Roman imprisonment (Col 1:1; Phlm 1; Phil 1:1)
- 10) Sent by Paul from Rome to Philippi (Phil 2:19-23)
- 11) During Paul's last journeys, left by Paul at Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3); receives letter 1 Timothy
- 12) During Paul's second Roman imprisonment, receives letter 2 Timothy; called from Ephesus to Rome to be with Paul (2 Tim 4:9, 13, 21)
- 13) Sometime during his life, imprisoned and later released (Heb 13:23)
- 14) Later traditions found in *NPNF 2nd Series*, 1:136, footnote 7 (at Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3:4)

These three men, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, worked together during Paul's second missionary journey, and collaborated in Paul's epistles written at that time (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1).

The Lord's leading into Macedonia

On his way to Ephesus, Paul traveled through the Galatian churches of Derbe and Lystra, and probably through those of Iconium and Antioch. The text of Acts 16:6 mentions the "Phrygian-Galatian region," which probably is the part of Phrygia that lies in the province of Galatia.

Paul intended to go on west to Ephesus, as the great center of population and commerce on the coast of Asia Minor. This would be his next logical mission in his goal to evangelize the Roman Mediterranean world. However, the Holy Spirit kept them from going into the province of Asia (Acts 16:6). We do not know the means of this prohibition; perhaps it was an internal leading, or a prophetic utterance, or the force of circumstances.

Paul then turned north and entered Mysia, a section of the province of Asia, in the northwest corner. He desired to circle back and preach in the province of Bithynia, but again the Holy Spirit would not allow this plan (Acts 16:7).

Thus they came to the corner of Asia Minor, the city of Troas, a prominent commercial center. Instead of working in Asia, Paul was to jump ahead in his plan and establish churches in Europe, in Macedonia and Achaia. On the third missionary journey he would be allowed to spend time in Ephesus. Apparently here in Troas Paul was joined by Luke the doctor, because a “we-section” begins at this point in Acts and continues until the party leaves Philippi in Macedonia.

At night the Lord gave Paul the famous vision of the man from Macedonia, who said, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” Thus Paul received from the Lord two *no*’s and one *yes*. In this way he was led to bring the gospel into Europe—a momentous step in the history of the church.

Three new churches in Macedonia

With a good wind, it normally took only two days to sail to Macedonia (Acts 16:11; with a contrary wind, it took five days, Acts 20:6).

Philippi

After landing at the port city of Neapolis, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke traveled to Philippi, which Luke describes as “a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia” (Acts 16:12; some suggest this was Luke’s home town, since he stayed behind here and seems to have civic pride).

In Philippi Paul followed his custom to speak first to the Jews; but since there were not sufficient Jewish men for a synagogue there, they met by the river as a place of prayer; women are mentioned specifically (Acts 16:13). Lydia, a prominent businesswoman (Thyatira was known for selling purple material), was converted, and entertained the missionaries in her home. Note Luke’s “Calvinistic” view of her salvation: “whose heart the Lord opened” (v. 14). Other women converted in Philippi may include Euodia, Syntyche, and perhaps Syzygus (if a proper name; Phil 4:2-3). It has been pointed out that Macedonian culture allowed more prominence to women than many other parts of the empire.

After healing the demon-possessed girl, Paul and Silas roused the hatred of her pagan owners and were beaten with rods (cf. 2 Cor 11:25) and thrown in jail with their legs in the stocks. Paul later wrote of this experience as “shameful treatment” (1 Thess 2:2; cf. Phil 1:30). Their cheerful testimony under trial convicted the jailer, who was saved after the miraculous earthquake. As Lydia had done, so the jailer had all his family baptized immediately; this was a sign of continuity with the covenant sign in the Old Testament, here given to Gentiles, one who had been a Jewish proselyte, the other a pagan.

The little church in Philippi was to be one of Paul's favorites, and was to care for him through the coming years (cf. 1 Thess 2:2; 2 Cor. 8:1-5; Phil 4:10-19).

Thessalonica

After demanding an official apology from the city officials, more for the sake of the local church than for his own, Paul and his party moved along the Egnatian Road to the next main city, Thessalonica. It appears that Luke did not continue on the journey, since the third person plural now is used in Acts. In Thessalonica Paul supported himself through his work (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:7-9).

He stayed there at least three weeks, teaching in the Jewish synagogue on the Sabbaths. His evangelism style with Jews is shown in Acts 17:2-3. Some Jews believed, and many God-worshiping Greeks, including many prominent women. Paul's success with the Gentiles caused the Jewish leaders to envy him, and to stir up the rabble of the city (KJV: "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort") to attack them. The uproar caused the city officials to take money from the new Christians to guarantee their good behavior. This was only the beginning of the persecutions that they would face from their countrymen and the Jews; Paul's attitude toward the Jews who hindered the gospel is vividly shown in 1 Thess 2:14-16.

The Christians in Thessalonica sent Paul and Silas (and probably Timothy) secretly away to Berea, a city off the Egnatian Way, to the southwest. Paul was forced to leave behind the infant church in Thessalonica, subject to persecution, and still in need of teaching. The two Thessalonian epistles, written from Corinth shortly after his leaving Thessalonica, describe his ministry with them, his desire to be with them, and his concern for their faithfulness in his absence.

(For the detailed discussion of the background to these epistles, and the related travels of Paul and Timothy, see the notes on the Eschatological Epistles.)

Berea

Off the beaten track, Paul's witnessing in Berea was calmer than in Philippi or Thessalonica. Here the hearers in the synagogue were "of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11). Many believed, including, again, many prominent Greek women.

When word of Paul's ministry in Berea reached the Jews in Thessalonica, they went to Berea to stir up opposition. Their campaign was so successful that Paul was forced to leave and sail to Athens; from there he sent for Silas and Timothy to join him. The church in Berea is not mentioned specifically again in the NT, but is to be included in "the churches of Macedonia."

One of the members of that church went with Paul with his offering to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4, “Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea”).

The mission in Achaia

The bulk of the time of the second missionary journey was spent in the city of Corinth, in the province of Achaia, or Greece proper. Achaia was one of the Roman Empire’s most elegant and exalted provinces. In fact, Greek culture had captured Rome itself. Paul’s ministry in Greece was a highlight of his missionary career, but at the time it did not appear so to him. The work there was difficult to establish, and caused heartache to maintain.

Athens

After Paul had sent from Athens for Silas and Timothy to join him, he had opportunity to preach to the educated pagans who lived there (Acts 17:15-34). Athens, the center of ancient Greek culture, was filled with idols, and Paul’s “spirit was stirred within him.”

He began his ministry there by speaking in the synagogue and also in the market place, the *agora*. There he confronted the philosophers, especially the Epicureans and the Stoics. They referred to him as a “seed-picker” (NIV “babbling”) who was preaching strange deities and the resurrection (perhaps a goddess “Anastasis”). They determined that he should present his views before the city’s philosophical leaders, the Areopagus. That council got its name from the hill on which it would often meet. Apparently, Paul did not speak publicly from the hill, but appeared before this council, probably indoors.

For photos of the agora, see the *New ISBE*, 1:351; for a good chapter describing the views of the Epicureans and the Stoics, see F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History*; for description and photo of the Areopagus, see *New ISBE*, 1:287-88.

Paul’s sermon to the Areopagus is one of the great passages in the NT. It is given in an exalted rhetorical style, and reveals a well-educated and profound intellect. Theologically it follows his normal approach to pagans (as at Lystra in Acts 14:14-17); even quoting from Aratus and perhaps Cleanthes in v. 28. The Greeks mocked the doctrine of bodily resurrection, as repugnant to their traditions and to good taste. However, there were a few who believed the gospel, including one member of the council, Dionysius.

Apparently, Silas and Timothy came from Berea to join Paul in Athens; then Paul sent Timothy back to strengthen the church in Thessalonica, and Silas back somewhere else in Macedonia. They were to rejoin him in Corinth (1 Thess 3:1-2; Acts 18:1, 5).

Corinth

The record of Paul's ministry in Corinth is recorded in Acts 18:1-18, and there are several references to this period in the Thessalonian and the Corinthian epistles. He was there a year and six months (Acts 18:11), fall/winter A.D. 49 – summer A.D. 51.

Paul traveled by himself from Athens to Corinth, a commercial city on the isthmus, renowned for its wealth and wickedness. On his arrival he found a pious Jewish couple who had come from Rome, Aquila and Priscilla. Probably they had already become Christians while in Rome, as there was a flourishing church there (cf. Acts 2:10; Rom 16). They, along with the other Jews, had just been expelled from Rome by the emperor Claudius because of Jewish unrest there (Acts 18:2).

Claudius was emperor A.D. 41-54. Suetonius, who mentions this event as being caused by "Chrestus" (*Claudius* 25), does not date it. Josephus does not mention this episode. The historian Orosius, who often quotes Josephus (cf. *Antiquities* 19:5:1-3), mentions this expulsion, and dates it in the ninth year of Claudius' reign (*Historiae* 7:6:15). That would place the decree in A.D. 49. According to our chronology, Paul arrived in Corinth in the late fall or early winter of A.D. 49.

Since Aquila and Priscilla shared the same occupation with Paul, tent making, Paul stayed and worked with them to support himself. On the Sabbaths he would preach in the synagogue.

When Silas and Timothy came to him from Macedonia, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, and shortly thereafter 2 Thessalonians (see notes on Eschatological Epistles).

Paul's preaching in the synagogue more and more was being resisted by the authorities there. Finally, when their rejection was clear, Paul separated from them and caused the disciples to meet in a house next door (Acts 18:7). In addition, many Gentile Corinthians were being converted from paganism. Thus the new church in Corinth consisted of two main groups: Jews who had separated from the synagogue, and Gentiles who had separated from the pagan temples. This theme was reiterated by Paul in 2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1. Some of Paul's notable converts included the synagogue ruler Crispus, Gaius, and Stephanas (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor 1:14-16).

Paul must have been discouraged and perhaps afraid at this time, for the Lord in a vision encouraged him that he had "many people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10). It is evident from the Corinthian letters that a large church did in fact develop there, and spread throughout the province (2 Cor 1:1).

One of his converts was "Erastus, the city treasurer" (Rom 16:23). A pavement stone inscription has been found in Corinth that names "Erastus" as the "aedile (treasurer)" of the city. Its probable text: "Erastus in return for his aedileship laid [the pavement] at his own expense." John McRae thinks this is the same man, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Baker 1991), 331-333.

One of the outstanding events while Paul was in Corinth was his appearance before Gallio, proconsul of Achaia. Gallio had recently arrived in Corinth to administer his one-year term, according to our chronology in the spring or early summer of A.D. 51 (see notes on Paul's Chronology and Outline, p. 4). The Jews used the opportunity to attack Paul and seek punishment against him. Instead, Gallio properly recognized their quarrel as a religious one and "had them ejected from the court." It is possible that the Sosthenes who was beaten by the mob was the same as the convert mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor 1:1 (Acts 18:16-17).

Paul's willingness to continue keeping Jewish customs is shown by the fact that he had taken a vow in Corinth, and in nearby Cenchrea had shaved his head when the vow was completed (Acts 18:18; 21:23-24). This agrees with his testimony to them, that he would do what he could to win the Jews as well as the Gentiles (1 Cor 9:20).

Return to Antioch

Acts 18:18-22 recounts briefly Paul's return to his home church at the end of his second missionary journey. It says he sailed from Cenchrea to Ephesus, thus arriving for the first time at the city he had originally intended to reach. Aquila and Priscilla traveled with him from Corinth to Ephesus, where they stayed.

Paul stopped in Ephesus only briefly, but he did manage to speak in the synagogue there. When they asked him to stay longer, he declined but said that he intended to come to Ephesus again.

In many Western and Byzantine Greek manuscripts of Acts 18:21 Paul is made to say that he was hurrying to reach Jerusalem for the feast, supposedly the Passover or Pentecost feast. Probably this is an early tradition about Paul, perhaps based on his haste in concluding his third missionary journey before the feast of Pentecost (Acts 20:16). The UBS text follows the wide variety of earlier manuscripts, omitting this statement with an {A} rating.

Paul sailed on to Caesarea, greeted the church in Jerusalem (his fourth visit there as a Christian), and then traveled to Antioch.

Acts 18:23 says Paul spent "some time" in Antioch; according to our chronology, he was there several months during the summer and fall of A.D. 51.

Paul's second missionary journey was now concluded. God had used him and his companions to strengthen the churches in Galatia and to plant strong churches in Macedonia and Achaia. Paul's next goal was to establish a strong Christian center in Ephesus.