

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for November 1, 2015

The Choice of Timothy
Acts 16:1-5

Acts 15:36-18:23 records Paul's second missionary journey to Greece.

1. The arrival in Lystra (16:1)

Paul arrived in Lystra during his first missionary journey not out of a predetermined plan but because he fled there after encountering persecution at Iconium. The last time Paul visited in Lystra he was assaulted with stones and left for dead (14:19). His commitment to the believers in Lystra exceeded his concern for his personal safety.

2. The affirmation of Timothy (16:1-2)

While Timothy was not chosen to replace Mark, his steadfastness in a dangerous town was in contrast to Mark.

Timothy's mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois were faithful believers (2 Timothy 1:5) and he was raised learning the Old Testament (2 Timothy 3:15). Being an uncircumcised child of a Jewish mother who married a Gentile would render him despised by the Jews, of whom there were few in Lystra. Timothy was well prepared to receive the message of salvation through faith in Christ when God sovereignly led Paul to Lystra.

Timothy's positive reputation in Lystra and Iconium (only eighteen miles apart) was important for service (1 Timothy 3:7). Paul also would come to speak highly of Timothy when he wrote to the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:19-22).

Timothy is a shining example of how a less than ideal upbringing can be used by the Lord to develop a devoted servant.

3. The appointment of Timothy (16:3)

Paul's choice for Timothy for this ministry was predicated upon Timothy's circumcision. The reason for this circumcision was for the sake of the ministry to the Jews.

This is in contrast to Titus, who Paul did not ask to be circumcised (Galatians 2:3; cf. 5:2). The reason why Timothy was the only one circumcised was because of his Jewish heritage since including an uncircumcised Jew would hinder their ministry (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:20).

4. The announcement of the decrees (16:4)

The “decrees” refer to a copy of the letter sent by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to the church in Antioch as recorded in Acts 15:23-29. Like Timothy’s circumcision, the decrees were addressed to the believers but for the purpose of ministry to the Jews (cf. Acts 15:19-21).

5. The advancement of the church (16:5)

This is the fifth “progress report” in Acts (cf. 2:47; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24). This report was particularly important because it shows that the growth of the church did not slow even as it advanced into Gentile territory and faced continued opposition.

This report concludes the focus of Acts on Asia as the rest of the book will be set in Europe. The church that began with Jewish converts was in transition to become predominantly Gentile in nature.

There is a correspondence between churches being strengthened in faith and their desire to win the unsaved. This is also true of individual Christians.

May we give ourselves to the spiritual needs of others, not just to our own physical needs.