

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Adult Discipleship
OASIS CLASS
Sunday, October 24, 2021

Chapter 16

- **Timothy is Recruited (and Circumcised). (16:1-3)**
- **The Holy Spirit Forbids Disciples to Speak in Asia, Mysia, and Bithynia. (16:6-7)**
- **A Vision Calls Paul to Macedonia. (16:9-13)**
- **Lydia is Converted and Baptized. (16:14-15)**
- **Paul Casts a Demon Out of a Soothsaying Slave Girl; Paul and Silas, Accused of Rabble-Rousing, Are Thrown Into Prison; an Earthquake Frees Them. (16:16-40)**

Summary

[Note: All quotations below, in chapters 16, 17, and 18, (with few exceptions, those where I've put words in some speakers' mouths) are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.]

- Paul and Silas travel to Derbe and Lystra, where they meet Timothy, a young believer whose mother is Jewish and whose father is Greek. Paul takes Timothy (but has him circumcised, because of all of the Jews who know he is Greek). Traveling through various cities, they spread the word about the decisions made by the council in Jerusalem, thereby strengthening the church, as well as expanding it.
- Having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel in Asia, Bithynia, and Mysia [!], Paul and Timothy pass through Phrygia and Galatia, ending up in Troas. There Paul has a vision of a Macedonian man saying, "Come to Macedonia" (north of Greece), so he goes, sailing to Samothrace [where the famous Greek sculpture of the "Winged Victory" was found] and then to Neapolis ["New City"] and to Philippi, the leading city of Macedonia. [The city was named after himself by Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great's father; it was also where (much later) Mark Antony and Octavian (soon to be Caesar Augustus) defeated Julius Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius, who thereupon committed suicide.]
- On the Sabbath, the disciples repair to the riverside, where they speak to the women gathered there, one of whom is Lydia, "a seller of purple goods" [i.e., the red royal Phoenician dye, made from crushed snails], who was a believer. She and her household are baptized by Paul, who goes to stay there.
- On their way, Paul and Timothy are met by a slave girl who is a soothsayer, making much money for her owners. She announces publicly that Paul and Timothy are "servants of the Most High, proclaiming salvation" [well, yeah], but this annoys Paul, who calls the demon out of her. This, of course, means that her

owners have lost money, so they haul the disciples up before the magistrates, claiming that they practice customs unlawful to the Romans. The disciples are beaten and thrown into jail, being put into stocks.

- Undeterred, Paul and Silas pray and sing hymns; a mighty earthquake ensues [some singing!], shaking the prison and opening its doors, and cracking the prisoners' fetters, freeing them. When the jailer awakes [he was obviously asleep!] and sees what has occurred, he knows he's in deep trouble and prepares to commit suicide. But Paul calls out that they (the prisoners) are all still there, and the jailer, coming to the faith, asks what he should do to be saved. Paul says, "Believe in Jesus, you and your household." The jailer washes the disciples' wounds and is baptized by them, takes them home, and all rejoice.
- In the morning, the magistrates, not knowing any of this, order the police to let the prisoners go. Paul says, "Phooey on that! We, who are Roman citizens, were beaten publicly; therefore let the magistrates themselves come to take us out of prison." Being scared when they hear that the prisoners are Roman citizens, the magistrates comply, apologizing as well. Paul and Timothy visit Lydia and the other Christians, then depart.

Chapter 17

- **Paul And Silas Preach in Thessalonica, Joined by Greeks and Women. (17:1-4)**
- **Jason, A Christian, Is Accused of Rabble-Rousing, But Let Go. (17:5-9)**
- **Paul and Silas Go to Berea, but Thessalonians Disrupt Their Teaching; Paul Goes to Athens. (17:10-15)**
- **Paul Debates with the Greek Philosophers of Athens on the Areopagus (a prominent rock hill north of the Acropolis, where early Athenian councils and courts were held). (17:16-34)**
- **Paul Speaks of the Athenians' Altar "To An Unknown God"; He Reveals That This Is the God of Creation, the Christian God of Resurrection. (17:23-33)**

Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Paul and Timothy arrive in Thessalonica, where Paul debates Christ from the scriptures with the local Jews. Some Jews are persuaded, though more Greeks are, as well as many of the leading women. ○ As has become almost standard practice by now, the enraged Jews raise the rabble in the city and attack the house of Jason (where the disciples are apparently staying). The crowd drags Jason and other believers before the authorities, crying that these people were against Caesar and supported Jesus, "another king." Having received assurances from Jason and his associates, the officials let them go. ○ Paul and Timothy are sent away by the Thessalonian Christians for their safety; they go to Berea, where the Jews are (Luke says) "more noble," and they

- receive the gospel with eagerness and examine the scriptures to determine the truth. As a result, many of the Jews believe, as do many Greeks and women “of high standing.”
- But the Thessalonian Jews show up in Berea to stir up the crowds there, too. So Paul is sent to Athens; once there, he sends for Timothy and Silas to join him.
 - Paul is disturbed by all of the idols he sees in Athens [notably, no doubt, on the Acropolis, where the great temple of Athena, the Parthenon, probably still held the elephantine statue of Athena by Phidias]. He debates in the synagogue with the Jewish leaders and in the agora, the marketplace (the traditional place for Greek philosophical debate), with the Greek philosophers, Epicurean and Stoic alike. Intrigued by this talk of “foreign divinities,” they take him to the Areopagus [the large rock hill just north of the Acropolis, where Athenian councils and courts of justice were held], desiring to learn more about that of which he spoke.
 - So Paul speaks to the Athenian learned men, and mentions their altar “To an unknown god.” He uses this altar to tell them about the Judaeo-Christian God [of whom they surely must have known something!] – the God of Creation and Life! – whom, he notes significantly, “is not far from each one of us . . . ‘in him we live and move and have our being.’”
 - Paul goes on to say, speaking pointedly of idols, that “we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man.” [He is doubtless referring directly to the great statues by Phidias of Athena at Athens and of Zeus, covered in gold and ivory, at Olympus, the second being one of the “Seven Wonders of the World” – as was the Temple of Artemis (a.k.a. Diana) at Ephesus].
 - Paul goes on to say that formerly God overlooked humankind’s ignorance, but now he commands all humans to repent, whereupon he will raise all humans from the dead. Resurrection of the dead surprises the Greeks, some of whom mock, but others of whom agree to consider it further. Among the new believers are Dionysius the Areopagite and the woman Damaris.

Chapter 18

- **Paul Goes to Corinth, Persuading Jews and Greeks; Silas and Timothy Join Him. (18:1, 5)**
- **Paul (apparently) Converts Fellow Tentmakers Aquila and Wife Priscilla (Paul was *formerly* a Roman lawyer); They Later Went With Paul to Syria and in Ephesus, Where They Convert the Learned Jew Apollos, Who Then Preaches Christianity. (18:2-3; 18-19; 24-28)**
- **The Jews of Macedonia Revile Paul, But Crispus, Ruler of the Synagogue, Believes, So Many Corinthians Are Baptized; Paul Stays 1 ½ Years. (18:5-11)**
- **The Roman Proconsul Gallio of Achaia (appearing, as it were, in the role of Pilate) Rebukes the Jews Attacking Paul; He Sends Them Off. (18:12-17)**
- **Paul Goes to Caesarea, Then to Antioch and Beyond, Strengthening the Churches. (18:22-23)**

Summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ From Athens, Paul goes to Corinth, a very rich Greek city. There he finds the Jew Aquila and his wife Priscilla, who had left Rome when the Emperor Claudius [uncle of Caligula, whom he succeeded as emperor, and who was later succeeded as emperor, when Claudius was poisoned with mushrooms by his last wife, Agrippina the Younger, by his nephew and adopted stepson, Nero] ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul is “of the same trade” as Aquila and Priscilla – they are tentmakers – as is Paul (apparently) after his conversion (he was a Roman lawyer originally), so he stays with them. Again, he debates in the synagogue, persuading Jews and Greeks. ○ Silas and Timothy now join Paul, who is reviled by the Jews, so he goes to the Gentiles. But Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, is a believer with his whole household, and thus many of the Corinthians believe and are baptized. The Lord, in a vision, exhorts Paul to keep teaching and preaching, and so Paul stays in Corinth for one and a half years. ○ While Gallio is Roman proconsul of Achaia, the Jews make a united attack on Paul and haul him before the tribunal, using the old argument that he is speaking against the law. But Gallio, playing Pilate’s role, says, “it’s not <i>Roman</i> law; it’s <i>your</i> law – <i>you</i> deal with it; I refuse to do so.” So the crowd beats Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, but Gallio pays no attention. ○ So Paul stays longer in Achaia, then sails for Syria with Aquila and Priscilla; at Ephesus he leaves them after he has again debated with the Jews in the synagogue. He sails to Caesarea on the coast, greeting the church there, then goes to Antioch, spending some time with the churches there. Then Paul passes through Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the local churches as he visits them. ○ Priscilla and Aquila, meanwhile, are still at Ephesus. Along comes a Greek Jew, Apollos, well-versed in Old [and some New] Testament teaching, but he only

knows the tidings about Jesus up through John the Baptist. He speaks enthusiastically in the synagogue, but Priscilla and Aquila, hearing him speaking somewhat inaccurately (or perhaps more unknowingly), take him aside and set him straight on the full message about Jesus. He is then sent on to Achaia, where he greatly helps the Christian believers, powerfully confuting the Jews in public by showing through scripture that Jesus is the Christ.