

Chapter Sixteen

Chapter 16

- In this chapter we are introduced to Timothy, the young disciple that Paul took under his wing.
- In verse 1 we learn that Timothy was “the son of a Jewess who believed, but his father was a Greek”.
 - According to the prevailing Jewish tradition that was extant in that time period, Timothy would not have been considered Jewish, because his father was a gentile. The standards of that era followed what is referred to as “patrilineal descent”, meaning Jewishness was determined solely through the father.
 - The very fact that Timothy had not been circumcised as a baby was proof of his status as a gentile.
 - The Rabbinic definition switched after the second temple times to what is referred to as “matrilineal descent”, meaning through the mother. Current Rab-

binic definition in Israel, at least among the Orthodox, follows this definition. Most Reform and Messianic Jewish congregations recognize Jewishness being established from either parent, as it should be. Further clarification on this issue can be found in my previous book, “Sacred Cows”.

- Verse 2 states that, “The brothers who were at Lystra and Iconium gave a good testimony about him”.
 - Apparently, Timothy had a solid upbringing which resulted in his strength of faith and outward character.
- Later in 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul writes, “having been reminded of the sincere faith that is in you, which lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, in you also”.
 - Recalling that Paul had previously ministered the gospel there in his last trip to Lystra, perhaps Lois and Eunice had come to faith in Yeshua at that time.
 - What do we learn here regarding the impact of living in a faith-filled home?
- Also, in 2 Tim 3:14,15 Paul writes, “But you remain

in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them. From infancy, you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Messiah Yeshua”.

- Consider Timothy’s godly upbringing by his mother and grandmother.
- What was the body of Scripture that Paul is referring to here? What is later called the “New Testament” had not been written yet! Only the Tanach, what is referred to as the Old Testament, was extant at this time, yet Paul clearly states that these Scriptures “are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Messiah Yeshua”.
- In chapter 15 of Acts, we learned the wisdom of the Jerusalem council that concluded that gentiles coming to faith in Messiah did not need to undergo the Rabbinic invention of ritual conversion to Judaism, the centerpiece of which was circumcision.
 - According to verse 3, why did Paul have Timothy circumcised? Was it not that, because he was regarded as a gentile, that he would not have had credibility as

a teacher in the synagogues?

- Obviously, Paul did not have an issue with applying the Torah-based instruction regarding circumcision when it was correctly applied as a “sign of the covenant” and not the later incorrect misuse of it as an “entrance rite” to the covenant and “conversion ritual” for gentiles.
- According to verses 4 and 5, the Apostles continued their journeys through various cities.
 - What was part of the content they delivered to the assemblies? Would it have included the letter referenced in the last chapter regarding the issue of gentile inclusion?
 - Who authored it and why was that important?
 - What was the result of their receiving these decrees?
- In verses 6 and 7, we see the Holy Spirit directing the Apostles in their movements.
 - What do you make of the Holy Spirit “forbidding them to speak the word in Asia” or “not allowing them” to go into Bithynia?

- How do verses 9 and 10 resolve this question for us?
- When God is guiding us, is it sometimes difficult to initially understand His will?
- Paul and his company did not find a synagogue within the city of Philippi. He did find a gathering of gentile women praying by a riverside on the Sabbath.
 - The description in verse 14 of Lydia as “one who worshipped God” is elsewhere translated by the term “God-Fearer”, a technical term for a gentile who was seeking the God of Abraham but had not yet submitted to the Rabbinic forms of ritual conversion, which included special prayers, instruction, a ritual immersion and, for the males, circumcision.
 - Lydia and her household were the first to receive the gospel in Philippi.
 - How was Lydia’s heart prepared to receive the gospel?
 - What was her response to Paul’s message?
- In verses 16-18 we are introduced to the fortune telling slave girl having “a spirit of divination”.

- What was her message as she followed Paul and company for many days?
- Was her message technically true?
- What was Paul's response and action?
- Why do you think Paul would not want any linkage between his ministry and this girl's prophetic utterances?
- Do you think Paul was following the example of Yeshua in not accepting testimony from demons?
- In verse 19, we learn the responses of the slave girl's owners to her having been released from demonic possession.
 - Were these owners joyful and full of compassion to see the girl's deliverance or were they only selfishly reactive to their loss of income through her sorcery?
 - What does that tell you about these men?
- In verse 20 we see the charge against them of "being Jews".
 - Is being Jewish a crime?

- Is it a crime in our day and age?
- How do we account for such anti-Semitic bigotry in our “advanced culture” today?
- Has society really changed all that much?
- According to verses 22-24, what happened to Paul and Silas?
 - Did “cooler heads prevail” when the rest of the population spoke up?
 - Did the official “magistrates” uphold a righteous standard of law and order, presumption of innocence, a fair trial, right to cross examine and deliberation by a jury of their peers?
 - Were the actions of the mob and the magistrates lawful, even under Roman law?
 - What are we to make of our current culture where anti-Semitic mob actions go unpunished? Is our culture any better?
- According to verse 25, what were Paul and Silas doing?
 - How incredible do you find that?

- Would you be able to remain so focused and steadfast in the same or similar situation?
- Do the events described in verse 26 explain why, in verse 27, the jailer was “about to kill himself”?
- Can you imagine what the punishment was, under Roman law, for a jailer to have his prisoners escape?
- What was Paul’s response in verse 28?
- What effect did this experience have on the jailer, according to verses 29-30?
- What was Paul’s message to him, according to verses 31-32?
- According to verses 33-34, what was the response of the jailer? What did he do?
- In verses 35-36, the magistrates decided to send word and to have Paul and Silas released and to “go in peace”.
 - What was Paul’s response in verse 37?
 - According to Roman law, as Romans themselves, Paul knew their public beating without a trial was an unlawful act against them. His demands for their

accountability caused quite a stir.

- According to verses 38-39, what was the reaction of the magistrates upon learning Paul and Silas were Roman citizens?
- According to verse 40, after seeing the believers at Lydia's house, they were encouraged and departed.