

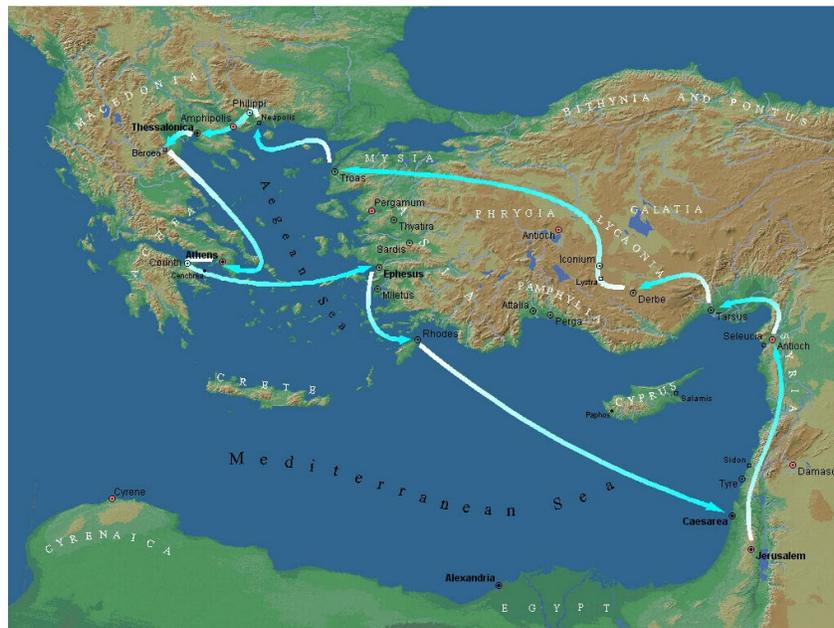
Acts 094  
Spirit's Negation  
Acts 16:1-10  
February 11, 2026  
Dr. Andy Woods

Let us take our Bibles this evening and open them to Acts 16:1. We are continuing our verse-by-verse teaching through the Book of Acts. We are continuing this evening with our verse-by-verse teaching through the Book of Acts. We made it all the way to Acts 16.

Jesus, prior to His ascension, gave us an outline of the Book of Acts, where He told the disciples: "You will be My witnesses both in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), and in all Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12), and even to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 13-28)" (Acts 1:8).

That last one is the longest section of the Book of Acts. That is where we are in the Book of Acts, the longest section is the second missionary journey of Paul. That is the section we started last time. It begins at the end of Acts 15 and goes through most of Acts 18.

Here is what the second missionary journey of Paul looks like in the form of a map:



We are at the beginning of it. The missionary journeys are all going to begin right here in a place called Antioch. We have read about that vibrant church that is the sending church. Paul is going to launch all three of his missionary journeys from Antioch, up north.

#### Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)

- I. Schism between Paul and Barnabas (15:36-41)
- II. Syria and Cilicia Ministry (16:1-5)
  - A. Timothy's circumcision (1-3)
    1. Timothy the man (1-2)
      - a) Journey (1)
      - b) Reputation (2)
    2. Circumcision (3)
  - B. Decree delivered (4-5)
    1. Process (4)
    2. Summary statement (5)

The second missionary journey began with an argument. Have you ever been in an argument with somebody? It is not always pleasant. There was a split between Paul and Barnabas concerning whether they were going to take John Mark on missionary journey number two, when John Mark had bailed out of missionary journey number one. Barnabas wants to take Mark because they are related, and Paul says, "No way." They have an extremely sharp—the Greek is very strong—an extremely sharp schism between the two.

Barnabas and Mark go to the island of Cyprus; Paul takes Silas from Antioch and retraces a lot of his steps from missionary journey number one as he launches out into missionary journey number two. We avoid conflict like the plague, but sometimes conflict can be good. Now you have two missionary teams instead of one.

Barnabas and Mark drop off the radar screen because Luke is not interested in tracking them. He is interested in tracking the steps of Paul. It is not as if Barnabas and Mark are unimportant; it is just they do not fit Luke's theme in writing. He focuses on Paul and Silas as they go off into missionary journey number two.

The first place that they go following this dispute, as they leave Antioch, is Syria and Cilicia. You wonder, since today those areas totally controlled by Islam, whether these missionary journeys could have ever occurred had they been in our time period. I suppose they could have, because with God all things are possible; but those are areas that are controlled by Islam. Christianity is not allowed there. That is where they went 2,000 years ago—Syria and Cilicia.

It begins with a circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:1-3); then as we trace this ministry, they start to deliver the decree that was handed down by the church at Jerusalem in Acts 15, which we have studied, which took Gentile believers out of having to submit to the Law of Moses to join the church. The good news of this liberty from the Law is now

announced by Paul and Silas as they launch out into Syria and Cilicia in missionary journey number two.

The first thing that happens is we run into this guy named Timothy, and we read about his circumcision (Acts 16:1-3). First, a little bit about Timothy the man. Let us pick it up there in Acts 16:1. It says:

*"Paul came also to Derby and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek" (Acts 16:1).*

The first thing you notice here is the geography. Luke is very detailed about giving us all of these points of geography. They came to Lystra and Derbe, which is basically southern Galatia today. We would call that modern-day Turkey. They run into this guy named Timothy, who was from Lystra. It says that he was a disciple, which means that Timothy was already saved. The question is, how did Timothy, who we are just running into, get saved? He was an inhabitant of Lystra. Paul went to Lystra on his first missionary journey, and it is presumed that under Paul's great evangelistic ministry that happened in Lystra that Timothy got saved.

Another possible way Timothy got saved is that he had the good fortune (if I can use that expression) of having a very godly mother and grandmother. You have things working for you when you not only your mom is godly, but also your grandma. They are mentioned in 2 Timothy 1:5, where Paul says:

*"For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that is in you as well." (2 Timothy 1:5).*

These two—godly mother and godly grandmother—taught Timothy the word of God from infancy, the Bible says. The NASB translates it as "from childhood," but the Greek there is "brephos [βρέφος]," which is actually used of Jesus in the manger, believe it or not. It is also used of John the Baptist leaping for joy in his mother's womb.

*"And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings—" (2 Timothy 3:15).*

What writings would those be? The writings, of course, would be Hebrew Bible, which we call the Old Testament. Then Paul reminds Timothy that these sacred writings that you have been taught from infancy by your godly mother and your godly grandmother *"are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 3:15).

That is something to understand: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Without the Word, you cannot have a salvation, because God

uses the Word of God to penetrate the hearts of unsaved people so that they can be saved.

I got saved through John 3 when I was about the age of 16. I was raised Episcopalian, and I thought I was right with God because of my good works. I was an acolyte in the church. We did all the smells and the bells and all that stuff. I had the Ten Commandments memorized, and I thought, "I am right with God because look at all these things I have done." But at the age of 16 in spring of 1983, I was shown John 3:1-5, where Jesus says, "Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

That was the Scripture that the Holy Spirit used to show me that I was not born again. I do not know if I would be saved today if someone had not shown me that Scripture, because the Scripture is what God uses to bring the lost to saving faith. That is what Timothy had going for him. He had a godly mom; he had a godly grandmother; and they taught him the Scriptures from "brephos [βρέφος]," childhood, infancy.

Paul is very clear here that it is these Scriptures that have the ability to bring us to salvation. That is likely how Timothy got saved, either through mom and grandma, or maybe Paul had something else to do with it through his first missionary journey into Lystra. That is why Timothy is called a disciple here. He is already a believer.

Then you will notice this name Timothy you will recognize the Greek word "theos," which is God. The name Timothy actually means "God honored." That is what his name means. He, of course, lived that kind of life, becoming a pastor at the church at Ephesus, accompanying Paul on his various missionary journeys, and of course there are two books in the New Testament that were written to him by Paul (1 Timothy and 2 Timothy).

His father was Greek, and then it talks here about his mother being a Jewish woman. His Jewishness was well known. It was a little tricky of a situation with Timothy because typically your Judaism is traced down through the father; but in Timothy's case, it came to him through his mother. It was fairly well known that Timothy had this Jewish heritage.

I have been trying to read Arnold Fruchtenbaum on this, related to circumcision. He makes the point in his commentary on the Book of Acts that if your Jewishness is traced down through the father, then circumcision is mandatory.

Genesis 12–25 Abraham's Early Journeys	
I. Unconditional promises (Gen. 12:1-3)	XI. Sodom & Gomorrah (Gen. 18–19)
II. From Haran to Canaan (Gen. 12:4-5)	XII. Abraham & Abimelech (Gen. 20)
III. In Canaan (Gen. 12:6-9)	XIII. Isaac's birth (Gen. 21:1-7)
IV. In Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20)	XIV. Ishmael's expulsion (21:8-21)
V. Abram and Lot Separate (Gen. 13:1-13)	XV. Abraham & Abimelech's covenant (21:22-34)
VI. Reaffirmation of Abram's promises (Gen. 13:14-18)	XVI. Abraham sacrifices Isaac (22)
VII. Abram Rescues Lot (14:1-24)	XVII. Sarah's death (23)
VIII. Abrahamic Covenant (15:1-21)	XVIII. Isaac's marriage (24)
IX. Hagar & Ishmael (16:1-16)	XIX. Abraham & Keturah (25:1-6)
X. <u>Circumcision (Gen. 17:1-27)</u>	XX. Abraham's death (25:7-11)

Circumcision goes back to Genesis 17. Here is a chart that gives you the entire life of Abraham. You will notice in event number ten, circumcision is introduced. Circumcision is something where you identify as a Jewish person with the Abrahamic Covenant. Of course, infants were circumcised on the eighth day (Genesis 17:9-14). You might remember Exodus 4:24-26, that God was actually going to kill Moses because he had not circumcised one of his sons. I think it was Gershom that was not circumcised. God was actually going to take Moses' life. This issue of circumcision in Judaism is a big deal.

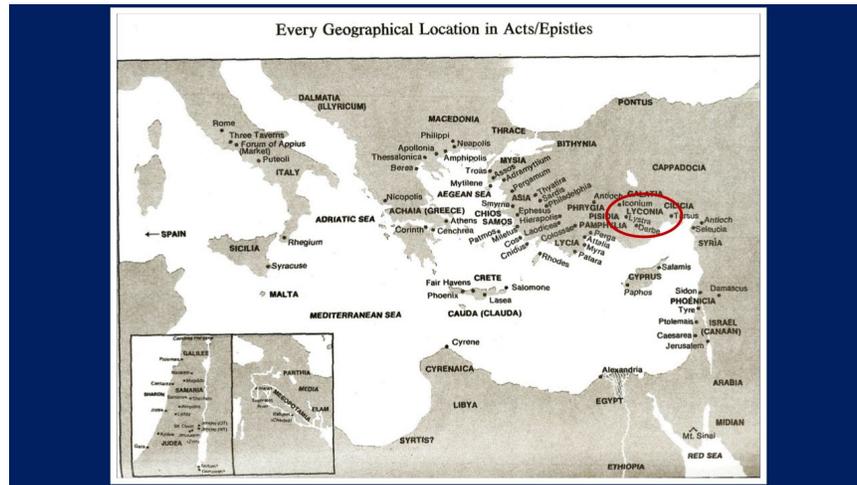
If your Jewishness comes down through your father, then circumcision is mandatory. If your Jewishness comes from your mother and not your father, then according to Arnold Fruchtenbaum, you had the choice of whether you could be circumcised or not. The problem here is that everybody knew Timothy had this Jewish heritage. They knew his mother, and they knew his grandmother. Paul was concerned that if he brought Timothy along with him on this missionary journey number two, which was Paul's goal, that it would be an offense to those he was trying to reach, to the Jewish people.

Remember, Paul always went to the synagogues first in all of these cities that he went to, unless it was a place like Philippi that did not have a synagogue. Other than that, he always went to the synagogue first. It is hard to reach people if you are offending them, so it is for that reason that Paul wants to make sure that Timothy is circumcised. Everybody in the area apparently knew of his Jewishness, and an uncircumcised person who can at least trace his Judaism through his mother, knowing that he was uncircumcised, they would not listen to a word that Paul would say. Paul was into removing any kind of offense that he could remove to gain a hearing for the gospel.

Then you will drop down to Acts 16:2, and we read a little bit about Timothy's reputation. It says:

*"And he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium" (Acts 16:2).*

Where are Lystra and Iconium? They are very near Lystra and Derbe. Here it is on the map of southern Galatia:



They were in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. Timothy's Jewishness was well known in that area. Not only was his Jewishness well known in that area, but he also had a very good reputation. Character counts. It is very difficult to minister alongside someone that has a very poor reputation in the community.

Paul, when he gives instructions about selecting elders in the church, writes this in 1 Timothy 3:7, of a potential elder:

*"And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:7).*

Timothy had a good reputation, so that was not an encumbrance to the gospel. Timothy was willing to be circumcised, so that was not an offense to the Jewish people that Paul was trying to reach.

Then you go down to Acts 16:3, and you actually have a reference there to Timothy's circumcision: *"Paul wanted this man to go with him—"* (Acts 16:3). Why did Paul want Timothy to go with him? Because Barnabas and Mark left Paul to go to Cyprus. Who was the replacement for Barnabas? Remember, it is Paul and Barnabas as a team that go all the way through missionary journey number one. Who is going to replace Barnabas? Silas is replacing Barnabas on missionary journey number two. Then John Mark bailed out of missionary journey number one, right when they got there (Acts 13:13).

*"Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John [John Mark] left them and returned to Jerusalem" (Acts 13:13).*

We are not really told why he left, but that is likely the reason Paul did not want Mark to accompany him on missionary journey number two. "The guy left journey number one. Why should I trust him with journey number two?" Essentially, Paul does not have Barnabas anymore. That is why he replaces Barnabas with Silas. He does not have John Mark anymore, so that is why he wants Timothy to go with him on missionary journey number two. I think it is pretty safe to say that Timothy is going to replace Mark just as Silas replaced Barnabas.

Then you see this circumcision take place. If you do not understand this, you will get very confused. You will think Paul is teaching and promoting legalism, which he is not.

*"And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek" (Acts 16:3).*

Paul did not have Timothy circumcised for purposes of salvation. Timothy was already saved. He did not have Timothy circumcised for purposes of sanctification, growth in Christ. He did not have Timothy circumcised in order to join the church. He had Timothy circumcised because if he was uncircumcised and people got wind of this and they got wind of his Judaism coming from his mother, there would be an immediate offense and an encumbrance.

Paul wants to remove all encumbrances to preach the gospel. He wants one offense to remain, which is the gospel itself, because the gospel is an offense. The gospel is the greatest blow, an attack on the pride of man, that has ever been invented by God, because what the gospel teaches is that you cannot save yourself. You have to trust in what Jesus did in your place 2,000 years ago. The natural man does not like hearing that. The natural man always wants to take some kind of credit for his or her salvation. The gospel will not allow that, so that is offensive enough.

Paul actually calls the gospel an offense in Galatians 5:11. Given the offense of the gospel, let us remove all the other offenses that might encumber people from at least hearing the gospel. If the Jews figure out that Timothy has Judaism coming from his mother and he is uncircumcised, they are going to be offended and they are not going to listen to anything Paul says. So Paul is removing any potential stumbling blocks.

This is a situation that I would mark up to 1 Corinthians 9:20, where Paul says:

*"To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win the Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law" (1 Corinthians 9:20).*

Paul will put himself under the Law at times in the Book of Acts. It is very important to understand this. He does not do this for purposes of justification. Justification is through faith alone in Christ alone. He does not do this for purposes of sanctification, because

Galatians 3:3 says that we are sanctified in Christ, the same way we are justified by faith alone under the power of the Holy Spirit alone. Paul does not go under the Law to tell people that they have to come under the Law of Moses to join the church. The Jerusalem Council ruling refuted that idea in Acts 15.

If all of that is true, why in the world does Paul insist on something that looks very legalistic here? It is not for justification; it is not for sanctification; it is not for joining the church; but it is for removing an offense. You have to file this under 1 Corinthians 9:20. If you do not understand that, then it will seem like Paul is contradicting himself, because Paul taught very aggressively against circumcision in Galatians 2:3.

*"But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised" (Galatians 2:3).*

Titus was in a different situation. He did not have Jewishness in his roots. So if he is circumcised or uncircumcised, it is not going to offend anybody. But Timothy's different because he comes from a mixed situation: mom, Jewish, father, Greek. Once the Jews understand that and they figure out Timothy is uncircumcised, they will be offended.

With Titus, Paul taught no circumcision. In Galatians 5:2-11 Paul is very clear that you do not have to be circumcised for justification or sanctification. The Jerusalem Council said, "Do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles" (Acts 15:19). If Paul is this aggressive on the subject of no legalism, do not go under the Law, then why in the world is he demanding that Timothy be circumcised? The simplest way to understand it is that he is trying to avoid an offense.

There are times in the Book of Acts where Paul looks like he is going back under the Law. We will eventually get to Acts 18:18 where Paul takes the Nazarite vow. Do you know about the Nazarite vow? It is in Numbers 6.

*"Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea from Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila in Cenchræ he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow" (Acts 18:18).*

In Acts 21:26, Paul, who taught against animal sacrifices constantly as a means for justification, himself issued an animal sacrifice.

*"Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each of them" (Acts 21:26).*

Here in Acts 16 he wants to have Timothy circumcised. You will be reading this and you will be saying, "Will the real Paul stand up please? Paul, are you against the Law or not? You preach against it, but then you go under it." Unless you understand the 1 Corinthians 9:20 angle where Paul will go under the Law to avoid an offense then you

cannot make any sense of what Paul is doing here. He looks inconsistent. That is why he has Timothy circumcised.

Then you go down to Acts 16:4-5. Now he is in Syria and Cilicia delivering the decree that has been handed down by the Jerusalem Council. There is a process given (Acts 16:4).

*"Now while he was passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe" (Acts 16:4).*

He is telling all of these churches, "The Law has been set aside. You do not have to go under the Law to be saved. You do not have to go under the Law to grow. You do not have to go under the Law to join the church." The Law of Moses, which had been in effect for 1,500 years, is being set aside. As I mentioned before, Paul only puts himself under the Law to take away an unnecessary offense to gain a hearing. That is the ruling that is being announced all over Syria and Cilicia. You will notice the reference to the apostles and the elders in Acts 16:4. This was a ruling that had been handed down by the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem. Who are the apostles? The apostles were the ground floor. They are the foundation upon which the church is built.

There is a definition given of an apostle in Acts 1:21, related to Judas and his suicide. They wanted to pick a substitute, and they settled on Matthias. Before they settled on Matthias, they were very clear about the criteria for an apostle. You had to have been an eyewitness to the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. You had to have seen His bodily resurrection from the dead. That is the group that the Lord built the church on using the metaphor of the temple. The church was built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

The first stone put into the structure is the cornerstone, Jesus Christ, in this metaphor of the church as the temple. The cornerstone is the most important stone that goes in first in a temple, because you use that to measure every other stone in the structure. Jesus is the cornerstone of the church. The apostles are the foundational stones of the church. From that structure, the Lord has been building the church for the last 2,000 years.

Anybody in construction will tell you that you only lay a foundation one time, so when people today tell me that they are apostles, I have my doubts. I usually say, "You look really good for your age because you ought to be about 2,000 years old by now." For the last 2,000 years, as people have been trusting in Christ for salvation, in this metaphor of the temple, God has been putting in the walls.

If you want my opinion on it, I think right now He is putting on the roof, because it looks like the building project is almost done. One of these days the very last Gentile will trust Christ, and the roof will be complete. The church will be summoned to heaven through the translation of the church or the Rapture of the church. Then God is going to put His

hand back on national Israel and complete their final week that He has with them—Daniel's missing week, given to us in Daniel 9:27.

These are the guys that handed down this ruling, the foundation stones of the church. Had they not handed this ruling down, the decision would not be binding today. To the apostles was given the power of binding and loosing. They handed the ruling down and it was handed down before they passed off the scene through death and martyrdom.

This ruling that has been handed down in Acts 15 is huge. It still affects us today. Paul and Silas are going to these churches in Syria and Cilicia and announcing this ruling. You will notice it does not only mention the apostles. If you look at Acts 16:4 very carefully, it talks about the decrees which had been decided by the apostles and elders.

We know who the apostles are, but who are the elders? The elders are the replacements of the apostles. They are going to be church leaders in Jerusalem. The apostles are not going to live forever. They are going to have to be replaced by a group of people that the apostles have been discipling. That is the elders—the plurality of godly men that were governing the church at Jerusalem, as leadership was transitioning from the apostles to the second generation of Christians. Ever since that point in time (the death of the apostles), God has been governing local churches through elders, which is a reference to a plurality of godly men that is supposed to be the leadership structure of local churches.

Then you go down to Acts 16:5 and you get a wonderful summary statement as this good news of no legalism is being announced:

*"So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:5).*

You will notice that Paul is into winning converts and taking the gospel to unsaved people, which is obviously very important; but that is not his only concern. He wants to see people that are born again growing in their relationship to the Lord. That is the work of a pastor-teacher. It is like taking a newborn home from the hospital, plopping them in the center of the kitchen and saying, "Help yourself to a ham sandwich when you get hungry." You would never do something like that.

We should never do anything like that with freshly saved people. Freshly saved people need to develop; they need to grow. Our instructions are not only to evangelize the lost, as significant as that is, but also to go into all of the world and make disciples, *"teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you"* (Matthew 28:19). Paul has not just an evangelistic emphasis. He also has a discipling emphasis. That is why he is retracing his steps on missionary journey two to places that he covered in missionary journey one, because he wants to see these new converts strengthened.

The word "strengthened" here in Greek is "stereo [στερεόω]," which means "to make strong or firm like muscles in a body." I have not been going to the gym lately. When you do not go to the gym regularly, your muscles are not what they used to be. If you do not use it, you lose it. You lose strength. Your spirituality is a lot like strengthening the muscles in the body. We have to be encouraged to develop. We have to be encouraged to grow. We have to be encouraged to go to the gym to do our normal workout, to take in Bible teaching, to involve yourself in prayer, to involve yourself in the spiritual disciplines, to involve yourself in evangelism, to involve yourself in ministering to other people, to involve yourself in giving of your time, talent, and treasure. You have to give yourself to trusting the Lord as you walk through difficulties. As that happens what takes place is that you are being strengthened. That is what this word means: "to make strong or firm, like muscles in a body."

As the church was learning about their freedom in Christ, they were becoming strong. Paul had already written them the Book of Galatians, where he says, "*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*" (Galatians 3:3). He is telling them that you grow as a Christian the same way you are saved, not by human effort under the Law of Moses, but through the resources that Christ provides. He has announced to them the ruling of the church from the council at Jerusalem, where they do not have to go under the Law to be a part of the body of Christ. They were learning about this freedom and their muscles were developing. They were growing. They were being strengthened.

Then you look at the end of Acts 16:5, and you have this magnificent statement related to the progress of the church: "*and they were increasing in number daily.*" They were evangelizing, and they were increasing in numbers daily. One of the things Luke is doing in this book is presenting Theophilus, his reader, with an orderly account of the birth and growth of the church so as to affirm Theophilus, whose name means "lover of God." We think Theophilus was saved. Luke wrote so as to affirm Theophilus in what he had believed.

Luke documents the birth and growth of the church by giving a historical account of the church as it grew numerically, as it grew geographically, and as it grew ethnically. How did the church grow ethnically? It started to transition from being a body primarily comprised of Jews to a body that we see today is primarily Gentile.

Then Luke is documenting the birth and growth of the church geographically by tracing the church's trajectory from Jerusalem all the way to Rome, where Theophilus, his target who he is writing to, most likely was. He is showing Theophilus: "Look at the movement of God to get the gospel to you, all the way to Rome, so that as you read this you can be affirmed in what you have believed. You believed the right thing."

Luke is also documenting the birth and the growth of the church numerically. How does he document the growth of the church numerically? Through what are called progress reports, where he gives a numerical count of how the church is doing. For example, in Acts 2:47 it says that about 3,000 people were saved on the day of Pentecost. Then as

you keep moving on through the Book of Acts it will say the number jumped from 3,000 to 5,000 (Acts 4:4). All the way through the Book of Acts, Luke is giving us these different numerical counts. Sometimes he stops being specific and gives more of a general account, but what you see in the first bullet point, are the clearest progress reports given in the Book of Acts.

**Progress Reports**



- Clearest:
  - Acts 2:47; 4:4; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:30-31
- Less clear:
  - Acts 1:13, 15; 2:41; 4:4:31; 5:14, 42; 8:25, 40; 11:21; 13:49; 17:6



One of them is right here in Acts 16:5, how the church was increasing in number daily. That is a progress report. In the second bullet point below, you will see other progress reports that are a little less conspicuous, a little less obvious, but they are progress reports nonetheless.

The church starts with the Twelve as Matthias replaced Judas, who committed suicide. Then you keep reading and it mentions 120, and then you keep reading of Peter preaching on the Day of Pentecost, and it says about 3,000 were saved. That is a huge numerical jump. Then you will get into Acts 4 and it will say that there are now about 5,000. You keep working your way through the Book of Acts, and it keeps saying—and it stops, probably because there are too many—the numbers were increasing, the numbers were increasing, the numbers were increasing.

The church is not supposed to sit, soak, and sour. It is supposed to be a vibrant body reaching the lost. Our author, Luke, is documenting these for the benefit of Theophilus, showing him, "This Christianity that you believed in is a real thing. This is a real work of God. Here is proof of it geographically, as we are tracking the trajectory from Jerusalem to Rome. Here is proof of it numerically through these progress reports. Here is proof of it ethnically, as what is gradually starting to happen is that more and more Gentiles are coming into the church in droves."

That takes us out of the Syria and Cilicia ministry. Then we get to Acts 16:6-10, the third thing that happens on this third missionary journey. The first thing that happened is the Paul and Barnabas split. The second thing that happened involving the circumcision of

Timothy was the ministry in Syria and Cilicia. Then the third thing that happened was something called the Macedonian call (Acts 16:6-10).

- III. Macedonia Call (16:6-10)
  - A. Prohibited territory (6-7)
    - 1. Asia (6)
    - 2. Bithynia (7)
  - B. Arrival at Troas (8)
  - C. Permitted territory (9-10)
    - 1. Vision (9)
    - 2. Group's conclusion (10)

We have some prohibited territory that Paul and Silas are not to move into; we have their arrival at Troas; and then the Holy Spirit, after telling them, "Do not go here, do not go there," gives them the green light to go into Macedonia, which is how the gospel penetrated the continent of Europe for the very first time. You look at Europe and all of the history of Christianity in Europe over the last 2,000 years. It was the cradle of the Protestant Reformation. You might be wondering how in the world the gospel ever got to Europe in the first place. Your answer is right here in Acts 16, through this Macedonian call.

Before we get to that, here is what the Holy Spirit says not to do. The Holy Spirit is really good at telling you what not to do as well as what to do. Here is some prohibited territory: Do not go into Asia. That is right there in Acts 16:6:

*"They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" (Acts 16:6).*

Prohibited territory number one: do not go into Asia. First of all, they are going through Phrygia and Galatia on missionary journey number two. Phrygia is ethnic, and Galatia is a province. When you study this in Greek, there is one definite article joined by two nouns with a conjunction in between. It is called the Granville Sharp rule, meaning that the two nouns are equal. When it talks about Phrygia and Galatia, those are equal in the sense that Phrygia is ethnic and Galatia is the province where this ethnic community is located. That is where Paul and Silas are traveling through here—Galatia and the Phrygia area.

They are moving right on through on their way to Asia. Where is Asia? As they are moving on through, the Holy Spirit says, "Do not go into Asia." Why in the world would the Holy Spirit say, "Do not go into Asia"? Does not God love those living in Asia? Why would the Holy Spirit say, "Do not go into Asia"? Because the Holy Spirit knows things that we do not know. That is why no explanation is given.

In hindsight, I think I know why. I have got the whole book now, and I can look back 2,000 years and put the pieces together. I think I know why the Holy Spirit said, "Do not

go into Asia." The Holy Spirit knew that missionary journey number three would happen. We are only on Missionary journey two, and on missionary journey number three, which the Holy Spirit knew was coming, the Holy Spirit knew that Paul would set up shop in Ephesus. He would be there for three years. He would lecture in a lecture hall.

A lot of people say God does not use the lecture method. That is an outdated way of communication. I hear people tell me that all the time. I am thinking, "Have you ever read the Book of Acts? Paul lectured in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus for two of the three years. What a lectureship that was!

*"This took place for two full years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10).*

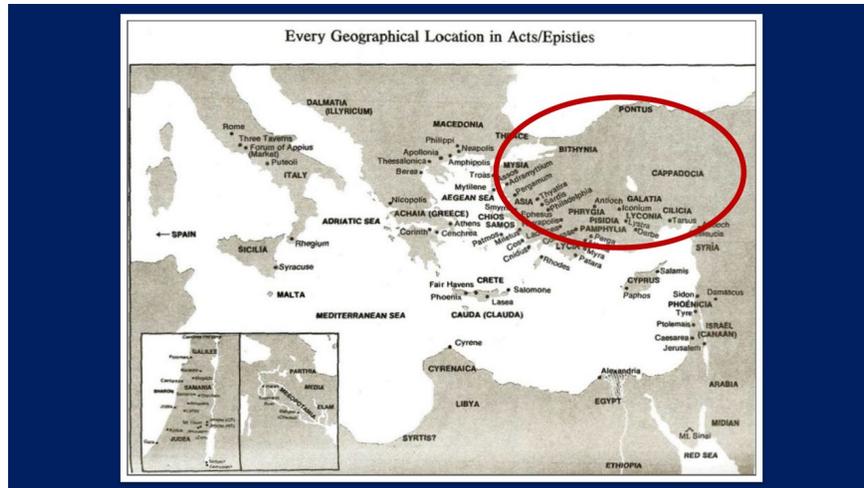
Now we have an explanation about why the Holy Spirit on journey number two said, "Do not go into Asia." The Holy Spirit was well aware that that group was going to be reached through Paul lecturing in the school of Tyrannus during a three-year stay in Ephesus, where he lectured for probably two of those three years. The Holy Spirit used the lecture method to bring countless people in the Asia area to Christ.

By the way, have you ever studied the Book of Revelation? Have you ever studied the seven letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, written to those seven churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea? Jesus was addressing those churches through John from Patmos in about AD 95. Have you ever asked yourself how all of those churches that are mentioned come into existence? How did all those people get saved? The answer is missionary journey number three. This is the Asia Minor area where Paul reached people in great proportions by using the lecture method (Acts 19:10). That is why the Holy Spirit said, "Do not go into Asia." The Holy Spirit knew what was going to happen in Acts 19 and how all of these people would have an opportunity to come to Christ. The Holy Spirit knows what He is doing.

Then there is another territory that is off limits. It is Bithynia. It is okay to try to do things, but sometimes the door is locked. God never slaps people's hands for trying. There have been a lot of things in my life that I have tried to do for the Lord, and the door was locked. It was not God's timing for that. This is what is happening here.

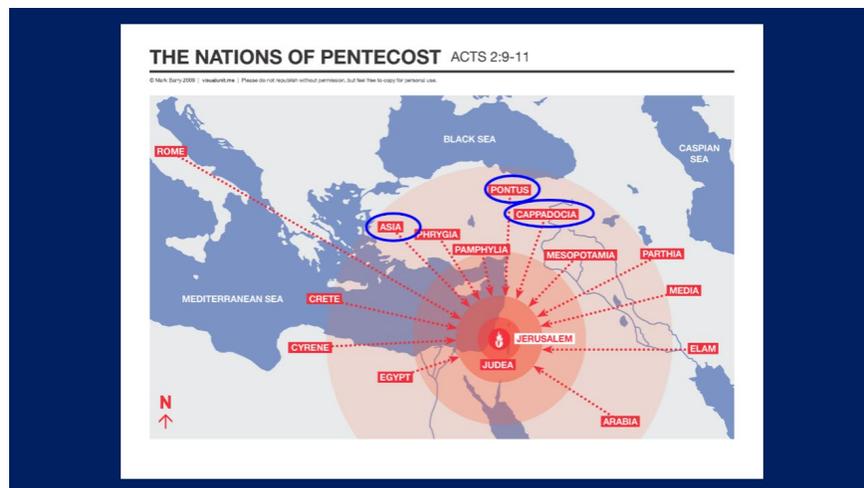
*"And after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them" (Acts 16:7).*

Here they are, Paul, Silas, and Timothy making their way through Mysia, and they want to go to Bithynia. The Holy Spirit says, "No." They wanted to get up here into Bithynia, and the Holy Spirit said, "No." First they wanted to go to Asia. The Spirit said no. Then they wanted to go up north into Bithynia. Again, the Holy Spirit said no.



Notice that the Holy Spirit does not say why they cannot go; He just says, "Do not go." Why wouldn't the Holy Spirit let them go up into that area? Hindsight is 20/20. I have the full book, and I can look back and figure it out. These guys—Paul, Silas, and Timothy—did not have that luxury, but I think they were not allowed to go up into that area because the gospel had already penetrated that area.

When you study the people that were there on the Day of Pentecost to hear Peter preach, they were from all over the known world who came to celebrate the Day of Pentecost—Jewish people. The Holy Spirit had a surprise for them. Peter preached the opening sermon of the Church Age on the Day of Pentecost, and about 3,000 people got saved through his proclamation of the gospel. Acts 2:9-11 lists the territories where these people came from. Where did they come from? One of them was Asia; one of them was in the Bithynia area; Pontus was another one; and Cappadocia.



Now you start to see an explanation why the Holy Spirit said, "Do not go up in that area." The gospel was already percolating up there. The Holy Spirit wanted to get the

gospel into Europe, so "Do not go to Asia. Do not go to Bithynia. Keep going." We are going to learn where they are going to go in just a second—Macedonia.

By the way, that group up north is a group that Peter would write to from Babylon:

*"To those who reside as aliens scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen" (1 Peter 1:1).*

That group already had the gospel. That is why the Holy Spirit said, "Do not go." The areas of Pontus, Bithynia, Cappadocia, Galatia, and Asia, were areas that had already been reached with the gospel. The Holy Spirit says, "We have taken care of that," but He did not give them the explanation that I am giving you. I am giving you the explanation to build your faith, that when the Holy Spirit does not want you to do something, and closes a door, do not hit the panic button. God knows things that you do not know.

If God did not know things you do not know, He would not be God; you would be God, and that would be a scary thought, wouldn't it?

The Holy Spirit says, "No Asia. No Bithynia. Keep moving into Macedonia." Now look at how the Holy Spirit is referred to here as the Holy Spirit is speaking to these three missionaries. He is called *"the Spirit of Jesus."* If you go back to Acts 16:6, it says, *"the Holy Spirit."* Then if you look at Acts 16:7, it says, *"the Spirit of Jesus."*

Why is the Holy Spirit, the eternally existent second member of the Godhead referred to as the Spirit of Jesus? Because Jesus, in the Upper Room said this to the disciples when they were all panicking that He was leaving. Jesus says, "You do not need to panic because the Holy Spirit is going to come to you on the Day of Pentecost. When He comes to you and resides with you forever, I (the mystery of the Trinity) will be inside of you via the Holy Spirit." This is a way better deal than interacting with Jesus externally.

*"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper ["parakletos [παράκλητος]," the one who comes alongside to assist], that He may be with you forever" (John 14:16).*

That is your eternal security. Once you are saved and the Holy Spirit is inside of you, you cannot get rid of the Holy Spirit. Did you know that? You could not get rid of the Holy Spirit if you wanted to. You can quench Him, and you can resist Him, but you cannot get rid of Him. He takes permanent residence in the life of the Christian.

*"That is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:17-18).*

"I am actually going to come inside of you and minister to you through the ministry of the Holy Spirit." The Spirit in Acts 16:6 is called *"the Holy Spirit,"* and in Acts 16:7 He is called *"the Spirit of Jesus."* He is Jesus inside of us. In Romans 8:9, He is called *"the Spirit of Christ."* In Philippians 1:19, He is called *"the Spirit of Jesus Christ."*

This is the Spirit that Jesus said would come that was telling these three missionaries where not to go and where to go. If they are not supposed to go to Asia, and they are not supposed to go to Bithynia, then where are they supposed to go? They go to Troas. Look at Acts 16:8:

*"And passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas" (Acts 16:8).*

There is no evangelism in Troas. Why did God not evangelize the people in Troas? Why does He keep moving them on to Macedonia? The Holy Spirit knows things these guys do not know. He knows what is going to happen in Troas on missionary journey number three. What is going to happen in Troas on missionary journey number three? Paul is going to set up shop there. He is going to preach a sermon that goes so long, it goes until midnight. These people miss the Super Bowl and everything. The guy just kept preaching until midnight, to the point where Eutychus fell asleep and fell out of a two story window and died. (That is what you get for sleeping in church, right?) Paul came and laid hands on him and raised him from the dead.

*"But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days. On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight" (Acts 20:5-7).*

There is going to be evangelistic activity in Troas on missionary journey number three. The Holy Spirit knows that and did not have them evangelize Troas. Instead, He had them keep moving into Macedonia. That is where not to go (Acts 16:6-7). And this is where they end up (Acts 16:8).

I want to show you how they got to Macedonia. It is the vision of the Macedonian man in Acts 16:9:

*"A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia to help us'" (Acts 16:9).*

"Do not go to Asia. Do not go to Bithynia. Why don't you come up here to Macedonia?" Macedonia is a whole region. It encompasses Thessalonica and Berea. That, in essence, is how the gospel made it into Europe.

"Do not go to Asia. Do not go to Bithynia. Do not spend much time in Troas, but come over here to Macedonia to help us." This is how the gospel penetrated the continent of Europe. This vision comes to Paul at night. We do not know what it looked like. We are not given a lot of details. He saw in this vision the Macedonian man. A lot of people believe that within Macedonia there was a distinctive culture and dress. Somebody in this vision looked just like they dress in Macedonia. That is why he is called the Macedonian man.

These three missionaries conclude wisely, "Let us go to Macedonia." Good call, guys.

*"When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:10).*

What is this "we" and "us" stuff? Dr. Luke jumped on board. These are the sections in the Book of Acts that we call the "we" sections, where Luke stops saying, "They did this, they did that," and all of a sudden he says, "We." There are three major sections in the Book of Acts. Luke writes like this all the way through the Philippian ministry. He is part of the group in the ministry at Philippi (Acts 16:10-40). Then there is not another "we" section until Acts 20:5-21:19. Then Luke, of course, is with Paul at the end when he is in Rome in his first Roman imprisonment. That is how you make sense of these times when all of a sudden, he says, "we."

Now you have not three missionaries, but you have four. You have Paul, you have Silas, you have Timothy, and then all of a sudden Luke jumps on board. That is why Luke understood all this geography where they went, when they went, and who they talked to. At certain junctures in the Book of Acts, he suddenly inserts himself as part of the team, because he is Greek.