

Paul:

After the Council at Jerusalem, Barnabas, Silas, Barsabbas and I returned to Antioch where we taught and preached the Word of God. The letter from the church at Jerusalem was the critical piece of authority we needed to continue evangelizing the Gentiles while refuting those circumcision-supporting Jewish Christians completely. However, I continued to hear rumors that those Jewish Christians were causing problems in the cities where we went on our first missionary journey. I decided we should return to the cities where we had established churches, and extend our mission reach.

After much prayer, I told Barnabas that he and I should leave soon. For the first time, my close friend and I had a sharp disagreement and decided to part ways. What I didn't know was that I was going to be on this trip for more than two years, and I would miss him greatly. I probably endured some unnecessary beatings because he wasn't there to help me (he sighs and shakes his head).

Barnabas:

I wanted to take John Mark with us...give him a second chance! He had been faithful in Jerusalem under Peter's tutelage, so I believed he was ready to be tested again. Paul was still upset that John Mark had deserted us on our first trip, and did not want to give him another chance. So, I decided to take John Mark and go back to my home island of Cyprus. Paul chose to take Silas in my place. Only time would tell if John Mark would ever mature. I truly hated to part with Paul, but the Holy Spirit reminded me that this way there would be two mission trips instead of just one. And it would give Paul the opportunity to train Silas.

When you read *Acts*, you might notice that this is the last time I am mentioned. You could infer that I had done my job in getting Paul trained so I was not longer

important. However, you could also infer that my work with Paul was complete and now it was time for me to concentrate on training John Mark. You can be assured that the Holy Spirit had not spent so much time and effort training me that he was going to let me become useless.

Paul:

It broke my heart to part from Barnabas, but the Holy Spirit told me to do it. But it wasn't all bad news. Silas was a Roman citizen, which turned out to be helpful.¹ On the other hand, he seemed to always be preoccupied with food.

Silas:

(we cut to Silas..he seems sucker punched by the accusation of food focus. So unfair.)

Hey....Come on.

Paul:

Silas and I started our overland trip, and encouraged the churches in Syria and Cilicia as we traveled toward the province of Galatia. Arriving in the town of Derbe, we had a joyful reunion with the church, and then we went to nearby Lystra. Everywhere we went, we shared the letter from James and the Jerusalem church, explaining the freedom that was being extended to people everywhere. It had been almost two years since we had seen our friends, and everyone was so happy to be reunited and to hear the good news from Jerusalem.

These were some of the same places Barnabas and I had established churches on our first trip. However, once we left Galatia, we left familiar territory.

In Lystra, we had a tearful reunion with Eunice and Lois, and got to meet Eunice's incredible young son, Timothy. Eunice, was Jewish but Timothy's father was Greek. Timothy had an excellent reputation, and seemed like he had a bright future as a missionary. The problem was – we were going to areas where there were many Jews, and Timothy wanted to be effective with them. We did not ask him, but...

¹ Acts 16:37

Silas:

Timothy chose to be circumcised, (he lets this sink in)

Paul:

That way he could share his powerful testimony with the Jews in their synagogues. He truly became all things to all people so that he could share the Gospel more effectively.

We traveled through Phrygia and Galatia encouraging and strengthening the churches. For reasons known only to him, the Holy Spirit kept us from going on to preach in the province of Asia or the province of Bythynia. So, we skirted the area and were led to the coastal town of Troas. Shortly after we arrived, Silas started getting sick. We were at a little sea-side inn, and I think he ate some oysters in a month that didn't have an "R."

Silas:

Funny...real funny.

Paul:

A kindly Greek doctor sitting nearby came over, gave him a home remedy... made him throw up...outside of course. We repaid the doctor by buying his meal and telling him about Jesus. He believed, and wanted to join us. You've - met him.

Silas:

Luuuuuke. Thank God, for Dr Luke.

Paul:

While in Troas, I had a vision of a man in Macedonia begging us to come there and help them. Macedonia is now known as the northern region of Greece. Without any delay, the four of us boarded a ship and sailed straight to Samothrace.

Silas:

As we passed the Sanctuary of the Great Gods, we saw the most beautiful brown-tinted marble statue of a winged woman who represented a victory of the Macedonians. Thousands of years later on, that statue will be the Louvre museum in Paris and still regarded as one of the finest statues ever created.

Paul:

From Samothrace, we traveled to Neopolis, and then to Philippi, a Roman colony named by Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great. Philip II wanted to own the city because of its nearby gold mines and its key location on an important trade route.

Silas:

Philippi was one of the great cities of Macedonia. It was where a key battle of Octavian and Mark Antony sealed the end of the Roman Republic and ensured the future of the Roman Empire. We started traveling on the Via Egnatia, or the Egnatian Way. It was the most direct route from Rome to the East.² A large, marble-covered military road,

Paul:

Once again, the Roman roads helped spread the Gospel.

Philippi was the first place in Europe I preached. It was also the first time I preached somewhere without starting in a synagogue... Just by the riverside. There was a rich woman, Lydia, from Thyatira who sold purple cloth. She was a God-fearer, but became a believer in Jesus, along with her entire household.

Silas:

She had a huge house, and graciously provided a wonderful place for us to stay, and eat.

Paul:

Lydia's story was a little unusual. She was a self-made woman in a system dominated by men. Very wealthy. She had a special talent - dealing with purple

² Viola, page 95

dye. Might not sound like much to you, but purple cloth was incredibly expensive, and in high demand because only Roman royalty and Roman senators could wear it. The dye came from sea snails found in a few places around the Mediterranean Sea. Each snail produced only a tiny drop of the dye, so millions of snails were killed every year just to dye a small amount of purple cloth. The final purple color was actually... a blue... indigo, like your blue jeans.

Philippi was another point on a growing trend of my ability to be persecuted. Silas had not been warned sufficiently of how dangerous it was to be associated with me. Once on our way to pray somewhere, a demon-possessed slave girl started following us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God." It was charming for the first day or two, but finally she wore on my nerves enough that I cast out the demon by the powerful name of Jesus Christ.

Casting out demons usually makes people happy, not this time. The slave girl had been able to tell fortunes, and her owners lost a very valuable asset when the demon left. This infuriated them.

Silas:

They seized Paul and me, dragged us before the town magistrates and made false accusations!

Paul:

The crowd joined the attack, so the magistrates had us stripped, beaten, and thrown into jail. The jailer was commanded to be very careful to guard us, so he placed us in the inner jail and put our feet in stocks. Oh, the ugly eye that Silas gave me! His hands were in stocks, or he might have done worse to me.

Silas:

Paul had promised me a nice sea voyage and some good Greek food, and instead I found my body all whipped and bloody. And the jail food was so awful I got heartburn and couldn't sleep. So, I decided to sing some hymns and pray, even though it was late... after midnight. What more could they do to punish us? Suddenly, there was an earthquake so violent that the doors opened and everybody's chains came off. I jumped up to escape, but the ever-surprising Paul

said, “Stay still, we are about to save some souls.” I’m thinking, we could save our own souls, but I had learned not to cross Paul...(he leans in to tell us off the record, shakes his head and whispers) temper, temper!

Paul:

With an attitude like that, you can see why I was wishing to have Barnabas back to encourage me. Anyway, the jailer came down, saw the door was open and got ready to kill himself. Escaped prisoners cause punishment far worse than suicide. I shouted, “Don’t harm yourself”, we were all still in jail. He called for lights and found we were all there, he fell on his knees and asked how he could be saved, he must have heard us singing and praying. We said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.” So, he did and they were. He cleaned us up, served us a meal. The food was so good that “sensitive Silas” didn’t even get heartburn.

Silas:

(Silas rolls his eyes as if he has heard the last remark) The next morning, the magistrates told our new jailor friend that he could release us, but Paul threw them a curveball.

Paul:

“We are Roman citizens!”

Silas:

They had beaten us without a trial. That was something that could cause them not only to lose their jobs, but to be severely punished under Roman law. They personally came and escorted us out of jail, and begged us to leave their city.

Paul:

So, we did ...after stopping by Lydia’s house and encouraging all of the Philippian believers. Lydia convinced me to leave Luke in Philippi to help strengthen the church. Also, I think some of her employees had gotten sick from the purple dye, and she was hoping Luke could help.

Silas:

(in the same way he yelled his name before when Luke came to the rescue)

Luuuuuuuke!

We left behind a small church in their care along with Clement, Euodia, and Syntyche, the other leaders³-

Paul

From there, Silas, Timothy and I traveled about 90 miles southwest on the Egnatian Way to the town of Thessalonica, the capital and the largest city of Macedonia. We stayed there for several weeks preaching in their synagogue. While there, our friends in Philippi sent us gifts to allow us to evangelize full-time.⁴ Many of the Jews and Greeks, as well as several prominent women, became believers.

Can't say I was shocked that the Jews in town were jealous, starting rumors about us, the city officials recommended we leave. So as not to cause any more harm to the believers, especially our new friend Jason, Silas and I left in the night. We left Timothy behind to help strengthen the church, they needed to learn how to overcome their bad habits. I asked Timothy to join us in Berea as soon as he could. By avoiding more trouble in Thessalonica, Silas couldn't complain about another little beating or bad jail food.

Silas:

No, but I did twist my ankle... as we *walked* toward Berea... in the middle of the night. Three days and 60 miles later, we got there, and I'm not ashamed to say, I wanted a nice Greek meal of cucumbers and onions on pita bread, but guess what Paul wants to do? We go straight to the synagogue and talk about Jesus. I keep thinking, "this Paul guy doesn't learn very fast," and has zero appreciation for good food. Anyway, things were going well because the Bereans actually searched the Scriptures to see if we were speaking the truth to them.

³ Philippians 4:2-3

⁴ Phil. 4:15-16

Little did we know that the angry Jews from Thessalonica had followed us, and started causing trouble. They especially attacked Paul, so the new believers in Berea hustled Paul off to Athens, but let Timothy and me stay. Praise the Lord, I finally got to have some good Greek food and sleep in peace. Timothy didn't say anything critical of Paul, but I'm pretty sure he was glad to have a break... from the chaos Paul was always causing.

Paul:

(it's Paul's turn to be in the hot seat. He lifts his hands and looks around as if to say "what?")

Silas:

I'm not saying that Paul misled me in any way about this trip, but promises of good food and peaceful sleep had not come true quite as often as I had hoped. I was beginning to think that Barnabas had made a wise choice of going to the sunny island of Cyprus instead of spending his time keeping Paul out of jail. If I ever have to choose between my good friends Paul and Peter,⁵ I hope it does not come down to food as the final incentive. Paul never thinks about food, but Peter's wife can do a kosher meal better than anybody.⁶

⁵ 1 Peter 5:12

⁶ 1 Corinthians 9:5