

Explore the Bible: September 29

Kingdom Work • Acts 15:39-16:10

By Becky Brown



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Paul and Barnabas left Jerusalem, returning to their home church family at Antioch of Syria. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem sent two men to Antioch with them to help convey the welcome conclusions of the council. These men were named Judas and Silas. They remained at Antioch for a time encouraging the brethren. Judas returned to Jerusalem. Silas remained at Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The Lord was about to reveal a new calling for Silas.

Their "furlough" finally came to an end. Paul and Barnabas agreed it was time for them to return to the places they had visited during the first missionary journey. They planned to deliver the decision of the Jerusalem Council to all of the newly-established church families. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them but Paul was adamantly opposed to that decision. Paul felt that John Mark had basically abandoned the work and should not return to the field with them.

By definition of his name, Barnabas was the son (bar) of encouragement (nabas). He was determined to allow John Mark another opportunity to serve on the team. Paul refused. The result of their disagreement produced two teams rather than one. Barnabas and John Mark sailed for Cypress. Paul invited Silas to join him. They left for Syria and Cilicia to encourage the churches established on the first journey. Some

“splits” can still be used by God to accomplish His purposes.

In the area of Derbe and Lystra, Paul and Silas met a young man named Timothy. His mother was Jewish. His father was Greek. Locally, Timothy had a wonderful spiritual reputation. Timothy became a traveling companion of Paul. He would be called Paul’s “son in the faith” as their God-designed friendship began to blossom. Timothy would become a young pastor and be mentored by Paul.

This second missionary journey of Paul would make possible the spread of the gospel in Europe. The team of Silas and Timothy and Paul were heading this way and that, doing their best to determine their next location of ministry. The Holy Spirit was their tour guide, thank goodness! They listened to His perfect plotting of their course. They would make their next move according to the direction of a man in a dream calling them to come over to Macedonia and help them. From Troas, they would follow their Instructor into Greece. They sailed to Samothrace and then to Neapolis.

In November 2002, I had the privilege of standing on a pier in the city of Neapolis (modern day Kavala in Greece). This was the port for the city of Philippi. I can remember looking down into the waters of the Aegean Sea and thanking God that Paul’s team followed God’s travel plan. When their feet touched Europe, the gospel was moving in MY direction (and YOURS)!

That year, we toured Philippi, Thessaloniki, Berea, Athens and Corinth. I spent a whole afternoon sitting on Mars Hill in Athens. Reading Acts 16-17 that day, I tried to visualize all of the “gods” Paul spoke of when he visited with the philosophers there. He would defend his faith in those market conversations.

What if Paul had not been listening to the leadership of the Holy Spirit on that second missionary journey? The good news for all of us is that he WAS a good listener. He was also an

amazing follower. Additionally, Paul was a great leader of others as they were introduced to his Savior, Jesus Christ through his ministry. He spent much of his time mentoring young Timothy, preparing him to become a pastor and leader of others. Kingdom work is the joy of God's heart.

Brown leads LittleBrownLight Ministries.