

Journey Two Preparation**Acts 15:36–16:3**

The Council at Jerusalem was an important event that not only verified Paul was a true apostle of Jesus Christ, but also gave credibility to the Gospel of Grace, which is what Paul was preaching. The leaders of the Hebrew church were led by the Holy Spirit to understand that God was now dealing with mankind in a different manner. All they knew was that God was working through the nation of Israel, and that the Gentiles needed to approach God through Israel. God was showing them that Israel is no longer being dealt with as a nation, and that Gentiles could now come directly to God without Israel.

Following Paul's salvation into the Body of Christ, God came to Peter to teach him that things were beginning to change. First, God showed him that Israel was no longer subject to the Mosaic Law by telling Peter that it was now okay to eat those things that were once unclean (Acts 10:9–16). This change demonstrated that God was no longer dealing with the nation of Israel according to the covenants. This means that every one of Israel's covenants have now been put on hold. They are no longer bound by the Old Testament covenants. God's covenantal dealings with Israel began with the Mosaic Law and was ratified when the people agreed that they would accept the provisions of the Law (Exodus 24:7). This would mean that when Israel was given land in 1948, it was not God fulfilling any covenant or promise.

God also showed Peter how He was changing His dealings with the Gentiles by telling him to go to an unclean Gentile (Cornelius) and present the gospel. Gentiles no longer needed to go through the nation of Israel to reach God. Peter used this information to help the church at Jerusalem to come to the conclusion that Paul was an apostle who had been given a new God-given message (Acts 15:7–11). This was one way the Holy Spirit actively led them to understand these major changes in God's program.

The process of their illumination is summarized in Ephesians 3:1–5. Paul says that he received the information of the Mystery doctrine directly from Jesus Christ, and that it was the Holy Spirit who then revealed to the other apostles and prophets that Paul's information was truly from God. When the Hebrew church at Jerusalem affirmed Paul's apostleship in Acts 15, they were also affirming that his message was unquestionably from God. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, the leaders of the Hebrew Church in Jerusalem would never have accepted Paul's claim that he had received a new message from God. The reason there was so much debate over Paul's presentation of the gospel that he was preaching was because it was quite different from what they had been taught by Jesus while He was on earth a few years ago (Acts 15:7). There are actually a number of "contradictions" between what Jesus taught during His earthly ministry and what Jesus Christ taught Paul in His heavenly ministry. These so-called contradictions become perfectly understandable when the Bible is studied dispensationally.

When the believers in Antioch heard the outcome of Paul's meeting in Jerusalem, they rejoiced greatly and were encouraged. Hearing this would have eased much of the unrest among the brethren because now they would no longer be compelled to obey the Law as the misguided Kingdom believers demanded. They could finally enjoy their liberty in Christ and worship together in doctrinal unity.

Sharp disagreement (15:36–39)

With his message and authority as an apostle fully accepted by the Hebrew church, Paul is now able to focus on continuing his ministry. He now desires to travel to areas previously visited to strengthen and encourage the churches already formed, and to move beyond where He and Barnabas originally traveled. He approached Barnabas with the idea for them to embark on another journey, but Barnabas wants to take John Mark with him. Paul vehemently disagrees because John Mark abandoned them on their first

journey (Acts 15:38). They part ways over their sharp disagreement over John Mark, and Barnabas leaves, taking John Mark to his home island of Cyprus. Paul decided to travel with Silas, who has been with Paul for some time in Antioch, since delivering the message from the Hebrew church. It was during this time in Antioch that Silas (a Kingdom believer) would certainly have become well acquainted with Paul's Grace doctrine making him well-qualified to travel with him (2 Timothy 2:2).

It is not unusual for godly men to have sharp agreements with each other. We have probably all seen this during a contentious church meeting, or disagreement over some doctrinal issue. The biggest problem with having a sharp disagreement is that it can undermine, and distract from doing the work of God. In Paul and Barnabas' case, they separated but continued on in their ministry. It was not a doctrinal issue, but rather a personal quarrel. No person is going to get along equally well with every other person. Family members have their favorites, and even Jesus had his favorites (John 21:7). We are not to feel guilty for not liking everyone equally since we all have different personalities with different likes and dislikes. However, we are told to love everyone, which would be demonstrated by doing what is best for one another (edification). We are told to live in peace and without divisions in terms of doctrine (1 Corinthians 1:10–11). Like Paul says, as much as is possible, live in peace with others (Romans 12:18).

Second Journey (verses 15:40–16:3)

Paul's second apostolic journey takes him back to many places that he visited previously, and then he continues up into northwest Turkey and then to Greece. While going through Lystra and Derbe, he met up with Timothy, who very likely was a teenager, at least on journey number one. It was in Lystra where Paul was stoned and dragged outside the city and left for dead.

Timothy was a young man who's father was a Greek and his mother was Jewish. Timothy's mother was a believer, as was his grandmother. They were most likely saved before Paul was saved and therefore they would be members of the Little Flock of believers.

It is possible that Timothy came to believe through the ministry of the apostle Paul during his first apostolic journey based on 1 Timothy 1:2 where Paul calls Timothy his son. However, it may be that Paul calls him that because they had a father-son relationship. Paul took Timothy under his wing to train him up in the Gospel of Grace as a loving father would do (Philippians 2:19–23). It seems very possible that since both his mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Lois) were believers, that Timothy also came to understand and believed the Gospel of the Kingdom (2 Timothy 1:5). In either case, Timothy came to understand and preach Paul's doctrine of grace.

Timothy moved around to various churches as needed. We see him first traveling with Paul through Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (Acts 16:1–17:4). He then went to Athens (Acts 17:14–15), and then followed Paul to Corinth (Acts 18:5; 1 Corinthians 4:17). Timothy then ends up in Thessalonica to strengthen the saints there (1 Thessalonians 3:1–2; Acts 19:22).

Later in his life he was left to oversee the church in Ephesus to make sure that correct doctrine was being taught (1 Timothy 1:3). This was critically important because, as we can see from Paul's prophetic warning to the elders of the church toward the end of his third apostolic journey that, savage wolves would come into the congregation and not spare the flock. He also warned that some of them would begin teaching perverse doctrine, and that they all needed to be on full alert (Acts 20:28–31; 2 Timothy 1:15). This is why Paul is so adamant for Timothy to preserve the words given to him by Paul through Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 1:13; 2:2). Later in life, Timothy was also jailed, most likely for defending his faith (Hebrews 13:23).

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