

Exegetical Notes, Acts 15:41-16:5

“Timothy Joins the Team”

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Acts 15:41-16:5

Verses 15:41-16:1

He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek.

- Paul and his new assistant Silas returned to the churches Paul and Barnabas had started.
- When Paul came to Lystra he met a young Christian named Timothy. Timothy’s mother was a Jewess who had converted to Christianity but his father was a non-Jew who did not believe in Jesus.

Verses 2-3

The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. ³ Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

- The Christians in Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of Timothy, and Paul wanted to include him on his team. But there was a problem. Though Timothy was technically a Jew because his mother was Jewish (For Jews, your mother determines your relationship to Judaism), his father had not allowed him to be circumcised. Therefore, prior to his accepting Christ, Timothy had not been a Jew. This was known by those members of the Church who insisted that all converts to Christianity had to first become Jews and be circumcised. While the Elders had decided against this opinion (See notes on Acts 15:1-37), Paul knew that these persons would object to Timothy joining his team and use Timothy’s lack of circumcision to cause trouble.

- So, Paul asked Timothy to endure circumcision in order to avoid any conflict with those persons, in spite of the ruling of the Elders that circumcision was unnecessary. Timothy agreed to do it, and Paul circumcised him.

Verses 4-5

As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. ⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

- Then Timothy joined Paul's team.
- Timothy then joined Paul in carrying the decision of the Elders that circumcision was not necessary in order to convert to Christianity to the Church.
- The Church grew spiritually and numerically.

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