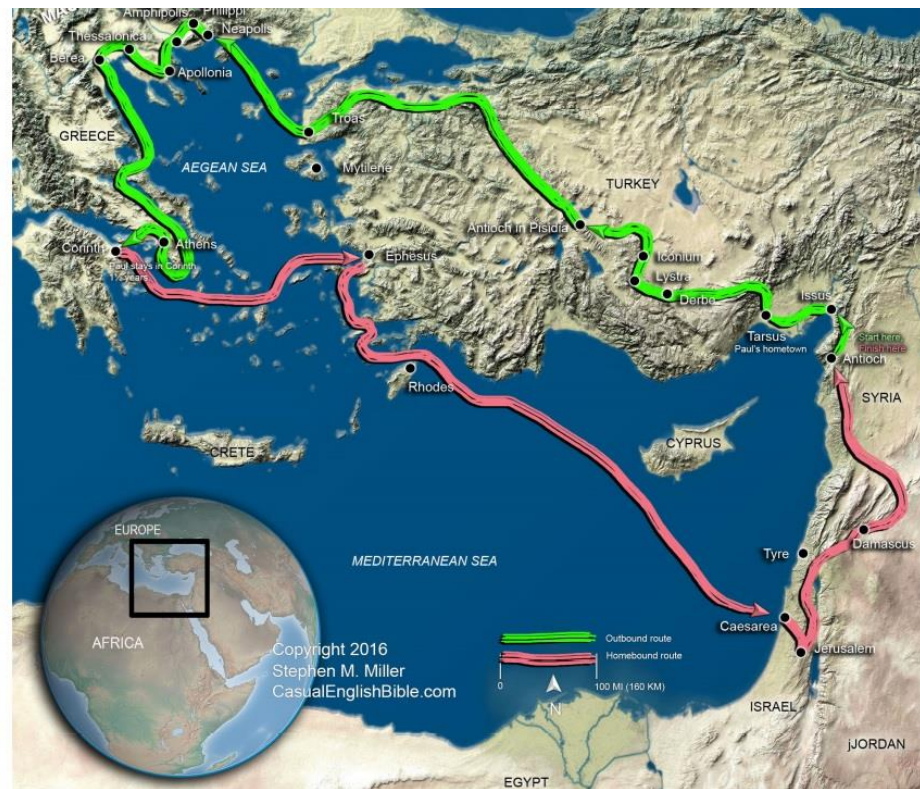


ACTS 15, 16, 17, 18
Paul's mission trip #2
 Three years, 2700 miles (4345 km)



In this reading, Paul is on his 2nd missionary journey.

Paul & Silas are at Phillipi.

1) Read Acts 16:16-40

Paul and Silas in Prison

¹⁶ Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." ¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

¹⁹ When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar ²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

²² The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. ²³ After they had been severely flogged, they

were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴ When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. ²⁷ The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

³⁵ When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." ³⁶ The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace."

³⁷ But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

³⁸ The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. ³⁹ They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left

2) In life we don't just want to be right in our decisions, we want to be wise!

Discuss!

3) 3 levels of living:

- I do what I want
- I do what is right
- I do what is wise

We don't just want to do our own thing or just to be right, we want to be wise and helpful? Discuss

Are we able to discern the best and highest path?

- 4) Read again verses 16-18 about the fortune telling slave who had a spirit
 - a) Note the use of the term 'we' in the first verse as the author Luke is now with them on the trip! (Before it had been 'they')
 - b) Is the girl making a true statement when she says "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved".
 - c) What annoyed Paul and what did he do?
 - d) How many days was she annoying for V18
 - e) Why didn't Paul cast the spirit out earlier, why wait several days? Surely this would have been the right thing to do rather than wait

- 5) Read again verses 19-24 about the reactions.
 - a) What had the slave girl now lost? What had the owners lost?
 - b) How bad were they flogged (v 23)
 - c) In view of these reactions go back to consider again question 4) e. In view of the reactions and consequences, what was delayed by Paul not expelling the spirit earlier? What was Paul and the team enabled to do? What advantages were there in the 'delay'? Could the 'delay' have possibly been the wise thing to do, rather than doing the 'right' thing earlier?

- 6) How were Paul and Silas harmed physically? (V22-24)

- 7) Read again verses 25-30.
 - a) Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God! How would you have reacted. What would your attitude have been in such a very tough situation. What does this say about Paul & Silas? What wisdom can we draw from this?
 - b) Why would the jailer want to kill himself? (v 27)
 - c) What happened to the jailer due to Paul and Silas not escaping and running away? Were there any effects for anyone else?
 - d) So what was the effect of Paul & Silas not escaping (which surely had been the 'right' and obvious thing to do!?)

- 8) What happened in verses 35 – 37?
 - a) What was the effect when Paul and Silas declaring that they were Roman Citizens?
 - b) Why on earth didn't Paul and Silas say they were Roman Citizens earlier and save themselves the beatings etc? What wouldn't have happened had they taken this approach? Do you think this is wisdom above thinking of yourself!?
 - c) How does Paul suggest he leaves jail! (v37) What do you think of this attitude?

- 9) This account is filled with wisdom and discernment! Discuss
- 10) How can you (we) use wisdom above what you want for yourself and above a number of choices that all may seem 'right' at the time? How can we

move forward to gain more of this wisdom? How do we exercise 'third level living'?

- Level 1 I do what I want
- Level 2 I do what is right
- Level 3 I do what is wise

Pray about the decisions you make and about how you can move more in the wisdom of God