

8. PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY TRIP (50-53 A.D.)

Acts of the Apostles 15:36–18:22



Paul entrusts his letters
to Timothy
Monreale Cathedral,
Palermo.

Urged on by the love of Jesus, who had commissioned him to take the Good News to his brothers and sisters, Paul could not remain in Antioch. After encouraging the Christians there to grow in faith, he set out on a new missionary trip.

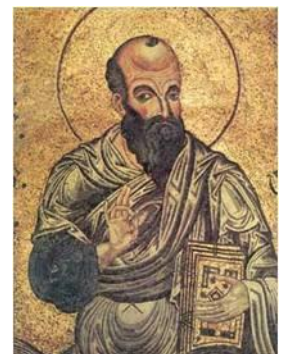
After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.” Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches (Acts 15:36-40).

This second missionary trip (50-53 A.D.) began sorrowfully because of the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, the friend who had gone in search of him and facilitated his entrance into the Christian community of Antioch. Paul and Barnabas agreed that they should continue their work of evangelization, but Barnabas wanted to also include Mark on this second journey. Paul was not of the same mind because the youth had abandoned them halfway through their first trip. Because of this difference of opinions, the two friends went their separate ways. In fact, they never worked together again.

With the support and prayers of the Antioch community, Paul set out with a new companion, Silas (also known as Silvanus), his heart overflowing with the sentiments of a shepherd and father. He was anxious when he thought about all the people who did not yet know the Lord Jesus, but he was also worried about the Christians, who needed to grow in the Faith they had just embraced and because of which they would suffer persecution.

Missionary work is demanding: it requires a lot of time, people willing to dedicate themselves to this service, and great love for the Gospel. Paul was able to find the opportune times to carry out this mission and co-workers to help him. After visiting the communities he had founded on his first missionary trip, he then went to Derbe and after that to Lystra, where he met Timothy, who would play a very important role in the infant Church. Timothy was a shy young man, the son of a Jewish Christian mother and a Greek father. Paul baptized the youth and had him circumcised because of his mother's background. After having rejected the timid Mark, Paul now

took the timid Timothy under his wing! Supported and helped by the Apostle, the youth would become his beloved and most faithful “son” (cf. 2 Tm. 1:5) and his worthy representative while he was in prison (Phil. 2:19-24). As for Mark, the *Letter to the Colossians* infers that Paul healed his breach with the young man (Col. 4:10) and the *Second Letter to Timothy* reveals Paul's esteem for him (2 Tm. 4:11). From Lystra, Paul and Silas, now joined by Timothy, headed for Iconium and from there they traveled through Galatia to Mysia and then on to Troas. Paul wanted to reach Europe but illness forced him to remain in Galatia longer than he had intended. In spite of his health problems, he continued to proclaim the Gospel, which received an unexpectedly warm welcome there. From Galatia, he directed his steps to



St. Paul
Monreale Cathedral,
Palermo

Macedonia. Luke tells us that this stage of the missionaries' trip was somewhat uncertain. It seems that Paul was not sure in which direction to head and consequently Acts 16:6-10 describes what was almost a zigzag journey across Asia Minor. Finally, Paul was visited in a dream by a Macedonian, who invited him to evangelize that region.

They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:6-10).

Fired by this vision, Paul and his companions crossed over into Europe and were led by the Spirit along new paths. From Troas they sailed north along the coast of present-day Turkey until they reached Philippi, the first European city they evangelized. Luke writes:

We immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

Does use of the plural here indicate that the author of the text, Luke, accompanied the missionaries on this stage of their trip? Many scholars say yes, pointing out that verse 10 initiates a long "we' section" in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul and his companions had finally arrived in Europe. Leaving the ship at Neapolis, they headed for Philippi, where they established a vigorous Christian community.

FOR DEEPER STUDY

Galatia

This vast region is located in present-day Turkey. In Paul's time, Galatia consisted of Lycaonia, Phrygia and Pisidia. The generic use of the word "Galatia" in the text leads scholars to conclude that Paul traveled through the heart of the region, not limiting his trip to the southern section (Lycaonia and Pisidia), which he had visited on his first journey. By this time, his style of evangelization was well established: he sought to reach as many large urban centers as possible because the Gospel could be disseminated to smaller towns from there. In fact, the people he met in these cities did a lot of traveling and so could become missionaries in their turn. Paul did not stop in the towns of Galatia on this trip. The Christian communities he had founded there were quickly infiltrated by Judaizers (Christians who tried to merge the Jewish religion with Christianity). These individuals tried to make the new Christians suspicious of Paul, his co-workers and the Gospel they preached. Paul writes a letter to the Galatians telling them that Christ saves them gratuitously, out of love. All they need to do is have faith in him.