

God Saves through Faith Alone
International Bible Lesson
Acts 16:1-15

Sunday, November 15, 2015
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“Paul wanted to take Timothy 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” (Acts 16:3).

Timothy’s mother was a Jewish Christian and his father was a Greek; perhaps that is why Timothy had never been circumcised, a sign of identity for a Jew. Because Paul and Timothy wanted to reach the Jews they talked to with the good news of Jesus their Messiah, Paul circumcised Timothy. Since the Jerusalem Council had decreed that a Gentile did not need to be circumcised to be saved and become a Christian, and since Paul taught believers to obey the apostles and elders decisions, we can learn something important from Paul’s actions for Jews who want to become Christians through faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. We learn that Jews or Gentiles can be circumcised if they want to and be Christians, though no one needs to be circumcised to be saved or become a part of the Church. When Paul circumcised Timothy they showed that Jews do not need to stop being Jews or stop practicing the customs of Moses to be Christians and receive the gift of eternal life from Jesus. They only need to believe in Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as their Lord and Savior. As Peter discovered and Paul later wrote about in his letters, Jewish Christians should not use their Jewish customs as a reason not to eat with and associate with Gentiles. If they did, many people would never learn about Jesus as their Savior. Jesus intends for Christians of all racial backgrounds to love one another and bless one another with the gifts God gives them. — L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Thinking Further

1. Why was Timothy a good choice for Paul to add to his missionary team? Give three possible reasons.
2. According to the Jerusalem Council, Timothy did not need to be circumcised to be saved or welcome in the Church. Why do you think Paul circumcised Timothy?
3. Why do you think Paul and his companions needed to teach churches in every town to obey the decisions of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem? What was the result?
4. When the Spirit refused to let them go into the province of Asia or Bithynia, how did Paul and his companions react?
5. What impressed you most about the conversion of Lydia and her household?