

Acts 16:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

Analysis

Paul's circumcision of Timothy 'because of the Jews which were in those quarters' demonstrates missionary adaptation without gospel compromise. Though Paul opposed requiring Gentile circumcision (Acts 15), Timothy's Jewish mother made him ethnically Jewish. Circumcising him removed unnecessary offense to Jewish evangelism while maintaining that circumcision doesn't save.

Historical Context

Timothy's mixed heritage (Jewish mother, Greek father) created ambiguity in Jewish eyes. His circumcision wasn't for salvation but for cultural credibility in Jewish ministry - 'becoming all things to all men' (1 Corinthians 9:20-22) in action.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do you distinguish between gospel compromise and wise cultural adaptation?

2. What does this teach about removing unnecessary obstacles to others' hearing the gospel?

Interlinear Text

τοῦτον ἡθέλησεν τὸν Παῦλος σὺν αὐτῷ ἐξελθεῖν
Him would which Paul with him have to go forth
G5126 G2309 G3588 G3972 G4862 G846 G1831

καὶ λαβὼν περιέτεμεν αὐτῷ διὰ τὸν Ἰουδαίους τὸν
and took and circumcised him because which of the Jews which
G2532 G2983 G4059 G846 G1223 G3588 G2453 G3588

ὄντας ἐν τὸν τόποις ἐκείνοις· ἥδεισαν γὰρ ἄπαντες
were in which quarters those they knew for all
G5607 G1722 G3588 G5117 G1565 G1492 G1063 G537

τὸν πατὴρα αὐτῷ ὅτι Ἕλλην ὑπῆρχεν
which father him that a Greek was
G3588 G3962 G846 G3754 G1672 G5225

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 2:3 (Parallel theme): But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

1 Corinthians 9:20 (Parallel theme): And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

Galatians 5:6 (Parallel theme): For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.