

Fact Sheet for “Rights” Acts 16:1-5

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Bill of Rights

1. Right to Freedom of Speech, Press, Peaceful Assembly, Petitioning.
2. Right to Bear Arms.
3. No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.
4. Right to not be searched without giving consent or without probable cause.
5. Right to not incriminate yourself.
6. Right to a speedy and public trial.
7. Right to not be tried twice for the same crime (Double Jeopardy).
8. Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.
9. The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.
10. The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

We speak of other rights that go far beyond these ten...

- Our legal rights
- Our right to health care
- Our rights with retailers
- Our right to choose
- Our right to be treated with respect
- Our right to an explanation
- Our right to an apology

The Old Testament speaks of “rights” in terms of “justice” or laws (Deut. 121:17; Neh. 2:20; Job 36:6; Ps. 82:3; Is. 5:23; 10:2; Jer. 32:7, 8). **8 verses**

The New Testament speaks of “rights” in terms of “authority” (John 1:12; Rom. 9:21; 1 Cor. 8:9; 9:4-6, 12, 18; 2 Thess. 3:9; Heb. 13:10). **10 verses**

But our society goes far beyond the Bible in speaking of “rights.” And the Bible speaks of something that is almost unthinkable to us... voluntarily giving up our rights for the good of the other person or in deference to them.

ESV ^{1a} ¶ **Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra.**

This begins Paul’s 2nd Missionary Journey. He is returning to the area in Asia Minor he visited on his 1st Missionary Journey, but this time goes by land from Syrian Antioch.

^{1b} **A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.**

Timothy was a Christian from Jewish heritage, though he was not circumcised. (See 2 Tim 1:5)

² He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. ³ Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

Remember Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10? Salvation had come to the Gentiles without their becoming Jewish! In Galatians 2 Paul wrote that he opposed Peter because Peter separated himself from the Gentiles, fearing criticism from the Jewish believers. In Acts 13-14 we see Gentiles flooding into the church. In Acts 15 with the Jerusalem Council we saw that Apostles and other Jewish believers decided that the Gentiles did not need to take on Jewish worship forms, nor did Jewish believers need to take on Gentile worship forms. So why in Acts 16 did Paul have Timothy circumcised?

It was for the same reason that four requests were made of the Gentile believers by the Jewish elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15:28-29). This was to cause no unnecessary offence to the Jewish believers.

Timothy was well within his authority *not* to be circumcised, but he gave up this right for the sake of many of those he would try to reach with the gospel.

Paul would later write of his own choice to voluntarily give up he rights for the sake ministry (*service*) to others (1 Cor. 9:4-6). Paul would also encourage all believers to give up their rights on needed occasions (1 Cor. 8:9). The context is that of eating meat sacrificed to idols.

The highest example of this attitude is found in Philippians 2:3-11.

Consider the result...

⁴ As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. ⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

We do have legal rights in our society.

We also have plenty of encourage from God in the Bible to hold those rights loosely at times for the sake of others.

Listen to the Holy Spirit's promptings within you.

Use the wisdom God has given you.

Then make decisions that are in line with both.