

READY, SET, GO / Sunday, November 15, 2015

Unifying Topic: FROM DERBE TO PHILIPPI

I. Paul Seizes An Opportunity (Acts 16:1-5)

II. Paul Obeys The Spirit (Acts 16:8-10)

III. Paul And Lydia (Acts 16:11-15)

The Main Thought: And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. (Acts 16:10, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Sometimes what starts as a small project turns out to be much larger, having an unexpected effect on the lives of others. How do such results come about? Because Paul respected the decisions of the apostles and elders, and because of his response to the vision he had received from God, his preaching resulted in the Good News being spread into new regions.

Lesson Aim: To describe how Paul's ministry changed and prospered by his openness to the opportunities presented to him.

Life Aim: To gain a greater appreciation of the wisdom of being open to new ideas and new experiences in evangelism.

HISTORY:

Acts 15:13-41 James, the Lord's brother, delivers the third speech in defense of salvation by faith alone to the apostles and elders. He spoke of Amos' prophecy in support of what Peter had said. ¹He then recommended they not trouble the Gentiles, but that a letter be written asking them to abstain from things offered to idols, blood, things strangled, and sexual immorality. The apostles and elders, with the whole church, agreed to send the letter and to have Judas and Silas accompany Paul and Barnabas to confirm its authenticity. The letter, its counsel approved by the Holy Spirit, was delivered and joyously received by the brethren in Antioch. Judas and Silas offered their exhortation and strengthened the brethren before Judas returned to Jerusalem. But it seemed good to Silas to remain there (vv.20-34).

Paul and Barnabas stayed teaching and preaching in Antioch, but after some time Paul wanted to visit the brethren in the cities they had traveled to on his first missionary journey. Barnabas was willing, but wanted to take John Mark. But, Paul insisted they should not take John because he left them on their first missionary trip. Barnabas was the one who stood up for Paul when the apostles didn't want to accept Paul. So, unable to reconcile, Barnabas took John and sailed to Cyprus, while Paul took Silas, and with commendation from the brethren in Antioch, and went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches (vv.35-41).

LESSON:

Acts 16:1-5 Paul Seizes An Opportunity

16:1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:— Paul on his return trip now comes to Derbe (city in the province of Galatia) and Lystra (city in Lycaonia in Asia Minor) where he meets a disciple by the name of Timothy. He was the son of a Jewess believer but his father was a Greek—meaning, Timothy had a godly mother and grandmother who were Jews, but they were also Christian believers. They were both so godly and strong in the faith that Paul mentioned it years later (2 Timothy 1:15). They both had a great influence upon Timothy. Outstanding things will come from their meeting. The word "*behold*" has the idea of looking and gazing at a wonderful discovery. It will show how Paul took Timothy under his care to develop and grow him.

16:2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. The report of the brethren in Lystra and Iconium was accurate when Paul preached on his missionary journey —of a godly believing mother and an ungodly unbelieving father, yet, here is Timothy, a disciple of Christ. The influence of a godly mother upon her child pays off. His mother Eunice was from Lystra probably heard Paul's preaching there during his missionary journey.

¹ http://executableoutlines.com/acts/acts_15.htm

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

16:3 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. Timothy is from a divided family spiritually; a half-breed—half Jew and half Greek, yet he followed God despite his father's belief. Timothy was only a young man, still in his teen years, probably around seventeen or eighteen years old. They all knew Timothy's situation; that his father was a Greek. Being an uncircumcised Jew (on his mother's side, but a Gentile on his father's side), the Jews would never let him preach in their synagogues. So, Paul wanted to take Timothy along with him on his journey, so he asked Timothy to be circumcised to erase any stigma the Jewish believers may have had with him that would be in those places they would travel to. For this meant that Paul had not given up on the Jews and that he would continue to go to the Jew first, then to the Gentiles. Therefore, Paul removed this stumbling block to Timothy's ministry. Timothy was not required to be circumcised (the Jewish council had decided that in chapter 15), but he voluntarily did this to overcome any barriers to his witness for Christ. Sometimes we may need to go beyond the minimum requirements, but not to be morally sinful in order to help our audiences receive our testimony.

16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. It should be noted that as they traveled from city to city, they gave the brethren the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem for them to observe and carry out. The message was the declaration of truth emphasizing both salvation (through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ) and behavior.

16:5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily. Two things are pointed out: 1) the churches were established in the faith and 2) the churches increased in number. This meant that it was a continuous, day by day experience. And every member was beginning to evangelize daily.

NOT APART OF THE LESSON VERSES 6-7

As they passed through Phrygia and Galatia, the Holy Spirit forbids them from preaching in Asia. Again as they came near Mysia, and attempted to go to Bithynia, the Holy Spirit didn't permit them. They couldn't go left to Asia, and couldn't go right to Bithynia. The Spirit forbade the westward mission and the northern mission, but indicated a straight forward course to the Spirit's call.

Acts 16:8-10 Paul Obeys The Spirit

16:8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. Troas is a seaport on the edge of the geographical continent of Asia. They had come to a dead-end at Troas. In order to proceed they had to cross the Aegean Sea. The Holy Spirit changed the cradle of society, for up to this time Asia (the province within a peninsular of Asia Minor) had been the cradle of civilization, but now it was to give place to Europe. They had to cross over. Europe was soon to become the center of Christianity and of civilization.

16:9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. It was not a dream or a trance that came to Paul, but it was a vision of a man standing, not kneeling, in Macedonia praying, saying "*Come over into Macedonia and help us.*" Paul was called to Europe. The picture of this man represented all of Europe, crying and begging Paul for help in the whole European continent.

16:10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. This proves the point that a believer should never be discouraged by some closed doors. God is the one who closed the door and if He did, He had a good reason. And He's able to open up a brand new door. Now, Paul and the others have a chance to take advantage of this open door in Macedonia. Paul's other companions are Silas, his assistant; Timothy, the young disciple; and Luke, the intellectual physician, and Greek by background. The variety of their backgrounds added balance and flexibility to the team. The Lord had called them to preach the gospel unto them. The response must be quick and immediate.

Acts 16:11-15 Paul And Lydia

16:11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;— The group took a ship from Troas and sailed a straight course to the island of Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis.

16:12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. Paul and his companions arrived in Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia; a Roman colony where they spent several days. Philippi was named after Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. Philippi fit right into Paul's master plan as being a strategic location, assuring the spread of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Both businessmen and salesman travelled both from and to Philippi from all over the world. Therefore, on this second missionary journey, the church of Philippi was founded.

16:13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. Evidently, there was no Jewish synagogue, so, Paul and the team went on the Sabbath Day, the day of rest, down by a riverside outside the city. This was a good place for a prayer meeting among the women. Some women had already come together and Paul and the others sat down by the river and began to speak to them there.

- The river provided the water necessary for the ceremonial washings involved in Jewish worship.
- Jewish law required a minimum of ten men to be present for the law (Torah) to be read. However, down by the river only women were present. The Jews considered women to be so unimportant that they were not worthy of the law apart from the presence of men, but Paul preached to these women without the men.

16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. Lydia was a businesswoman; a merchant of purple cloth, so she probably was wealthy. Purple cloth was valuable and expensive and a demand in the Roman world. It was usually worn on the toga or outer garments, as a sign of nobility or royalty. This certain woman, Lydia was from Thyatira. She worshipped God and God opened her heart as she heard Paul and the others speak. She listened and kept on listening, giving utmost attention to the gospel. No person is ever converted who does not listen to or hear the gospel. An important note: no one is ever saved by the preacher. The Word says in Rom.10:14c "...how shall they hear without a preacher?" The key word to that scripture is "hear." The preacher is needed to bear witness, for God is the One who does the saving. Only God can open the heart of a person.

- She sought and worshipped God.
- She listened and heard the gospel.
- She had her heart opened by the Lord.

16:15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. Lydia accepted all that Paul had said and was immediately baptized, and her household followed her example and was baptized. She lived for Christ and witnessed to all under her influence. This was significant before her household.

- She was immediately baptized.
- She led her whole house to the Lord.
- She opened her home to others for the Lord.

She wanted Paul and the others to come and abide in her house, only if they agreed and found her to be faithful to the Lord. She urged them until they did.

SUMMARY:

²With this chapter we find Paul on his second missionary journey that began in Acts 15:40 with Paul and Silas passing through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening churches along the way. In Derbe and Lystra, Paul enlisted a young disciple

² http://executableoutlines.com/acts/acts_16.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>

named Timothy who would become a life-long fellow-worker in the kingdom. His mother was a believing Jew (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5) but his father was Greek. So, with many Jews in the region, Paul had Timothy circumcised. As Paul's company traveled through Phrygia and Galatia, they delivered the decrees from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem and strengthened the churches (**vv.1-5**).

They passed by Mysia down to Troas and Paul had a vision in the night of a man in Macedonia standing and praying for Paul to come there to help them. After seeing the vision, he and the team, along with Luke, headed out, being of assured that they were to preach the gospel unto the people there (**vv.8-10**).

From Troas to Samothracia and then Neapolis, the company finally arrived in Philippi. A major city of Macedonia and Roman colony, would mark Paul's first ministry on the European continent, but overall this was his second missionary journey. On the Sabbath Paul and his companions went down to the river where women were praying. As Paul spoke, a religious business woman of Thyatira named Lydia listened. The Lord opened her heart to heed Paul, which resulted in her and her household being baptized. She then persuaded Paul and his companions to stay at her house (**vv.11-15**).