

"The Second Missionary Journey"

Part 3

Acts 15:41-18:22

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we followed with Paul and Silas as they departed on the second missionary journey in an effort to revisit the churches started on the first journey. When they came to Lystra and Derbe they gathered up Timothy and he joined them. As they traveled through Galatia and continued west, they came to Asia and desired to preach the Gospel there and they probably wanted to eventually get to the major city of Ephesus, but the Holy Spirit stopped them somehow. They then changed their focus and desired to go north to Bithynia, but God stopped them from going there also. They then came to Troas and there they stopped on the edge of the Aegean Sea. The entire journey across Asia was uneventful. The Gospel was not preached though there were many cities with people who were not saved. But God had another plan and that was to get the Gospel to Europe. The Gospel would make it to Asia through Ephesus but not until the time was right.

Application:

Just as a reminder from last week, there are sometimes long corridors in our lives in which it seems as though nothing is happening. But we can be sure that He has a plan and when the time is right it will be made known and it will unfold. When the missionary team arrived at Troas, we do not know how long they were there before Paul was given the vision. The application is that sometimes God blocks our paths and sometimes He just stops us for extended periods of time and all we can do is wait. It is those times when there just are no open doors and the last thing we want to do is force our way through a door that God has shut. When we do that, we can be sure there will be something behind it that we do not care to deal with.

So, while the team waited at Troas God gave a vision to Paul.

Notice Acts 16:8-9

The vision was clear to Paul and now that they had the direction of the Spirit, they were ready to move.

Notice Acts 16:10

They would waste no time but they would immediately depart for Macedonia.

Application:

I just need to make an application here that is really important. When God lays it upon our hearts to go and share the Gospel with someone we must go at that time. There are several reasons why we must move quickly.

1. They may die.
2. The Spirit is working in their heart at that very moment and may not be a day later.

Genesis 6:3

³ And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

3. The door of opportunity may get slammed shut if we wait.

1 Peter 3:15

¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and **be ready always** to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Notice Acts 16:11-12

Philippi which was the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. The citizens of Philippi considered themselves to be a very privileged city under direct Roman authority. This city was named after Philip of Macedonia, who was the father of Alexander the Great three hundred years earlier. It was a very important city in those days and was located on the Egnatian Way. This Roman highway connected the Aegean Sea with the Adriatic Sea. Philippi was a city encircled by two rivers. Philippi was a very prominent city. The opportunities to share the Gospel here would be innumerable.

"The Women at the River"

Notice Acts 16:13

Normally Paul would go to the synagogue of the city on the Sabbath but Philippi had no synagogue so the team went to the river where they found a small group of women having a prayer meeting. According to Jewish custom ten Jewish men were needed to establish a synagogue and apparently Philippi did not meet the requirement.

I want to go back a few verses for a moment.

Notice Acts 16:9

The man of Macedonia turned out to be a small group of women. Last week we touched on this briefly and I want to just remind you of the lesson here. Sometimes the answers to

our prayers are far different than we would expect. For this reason, I wonder how many times God has answered our prayers but we have missed what He has done because it was not what we expected. Paul and Silas did not seem to be disappointed by what they found. They were content to just be able to share the Gospel with anyone who would listen.

Application:

When God gives us a responsibility to carry out, we must understand that it may not always go the way we expect it to go. There will be challenges and trials along the way. But in all of this we should first of all be joyful because we get to serve Him.

1 Thessalonians 5:16

¹⁶ Rejoice evermore.

Philippians 2:14-16

¹⁴ Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

¹⁵ *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;*

¹⁶ *Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

We should also do what God has entrusted to us to the very best of our ability.

Colossians 3:23-25

²³ *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;*

²⁴ *Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*

²⁵ *But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.*

We also considered last week how Paul and Silas did not consider this group of women to be insignificant.

Zechariah 4:9-10

⁹ *The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.*

¹⁰ For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

Whatever God entrusts to us it is important.

1 Corinthians 12:14-18

¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many.

¹⁵ If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

¹⁶ And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

¹⁸ But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

Notice Acts 16:13 again.

These women had made a choice to get out of the city and to go by the river side to have their prayer meeting. This was probably a weekly practice with these women. They had no idea the blessing that was coming their way when the missionary team would show up.

Application:

This would be a wonderful practice for all of us to have in our lives. A time to get away from the crowds and the distractions of life, to sit down and have quiet time with the Lord. This was something that Jesus practiced in His life while He was on the earth.

Matthew 14:23

²³ And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Mark 1:35

³⁵ And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Luke 5:15-16

¹⁵ But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

¹⁶ And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

We can be sure our quiet time with the Lord will bring about spiritual growth and a deeper walk but who knows what else God may do in our quiet time. Consider again the women by the river at Philippi. The Spirit of God used the prayer meeting of the women by the river to prepare their hearts to for the blessing that would come as Paul and Silas would share the Gospel. Another blessing from this little prayer meeting was that this would be the start of the church at Philippi.

Notice Acts 16:14

Here in this verse the Holy Spirit focuses upon a woman by the name of Lydia. She was from the city of Thyatira. Thyatira was a city in Asia which was famous for its production of purple dye. The purple dye came from a type of seashell or mollusk. It was also very valuable and very much in demand. A lot of work was required to extract the purple dye and thus only the wealthy could afford to purchase the purple-colored garments. Purple in the Bible speaks of wealth and royalty.

Mark 15:16-17

¹⁶ And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band.

¹⁷ And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,

Jesus was clothed in purple as a way to mock Him because He claimed to be a King.

Luke 16:19-20

¹⁹ There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

²⁰ And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

We are told the rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen to help us to understand how wealthy he was.

Revelation 17:1-4

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

² With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

³ So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

*⁴ **And the woman was arrayed in purple** and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:*

This is religious Babylon of the Tribulation and we can see from verse 4 that this religious system will be very wealthy because it is arrayed in purple. This is Roman Catholicism. This will be the apostate church of the Tribulation after the True church is gone.

Notice Acts 16:14-15

We will come back to these verses again next week. What I want to draw your attention to is that Lydia was from Thyatira and she also had a house in Philippi. Lydia was a wealthy lady and she worshipped God. When she heard the Gospel from Paul and Silas God opened her heart and she received the Truth. This is a point that needs to be understood by believers. Unless God opens the heart, a person can by no means be saved.

Notice the words of A. C. Gaebelien.

"[God] Himself must open the doors of the hearts of the hearers. Human hands could not do this; the power belongs to Him alone, unless the Lord goes before and prepares the hearts for the reception of the truth and removes the bars, all efforts are in vain. May those who go forth to preach the Gospel look to the Lord to open the hearts of the hearers, and when precious souls accept the truth, let us give the praise and the glory to Him and not to the evangelists."

Conclusion:

This is why it is so dangerous when churches call on sinners to pray a prayer or to fill out a decision card. There have been many people who have prayed and ask Jesus in their heart and they are still lost because God was not in it. We are not saved by a prayer we are saved by grace through FAITH and God must reveal the Truth so that we can exercise our FAITH in the finished work of Jesus Christ. God must open the heart.