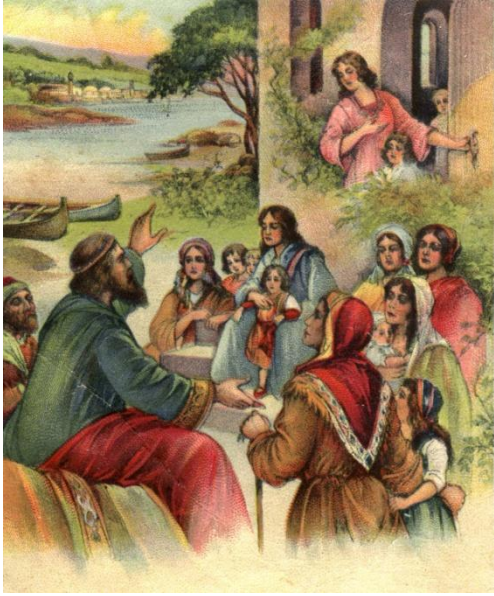


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 5



PHILIPPI RECEIVES THE GOSPEL

Scripture Text: Acts 16:1-15

This disagreement of Paul and Barnabas resulted in two teams going to visit churches. In our lesson today we follow the movement of Paul and Silas. They revisited some churches where Paul had preached. They went into what is now called Asia Minor, but the Holy Spirit had reason to forbid the Word to be preached in Asia. They were obedient to the leading of the Spirit.

Paul, in a vision, was directed to Macedonia. They preached in Philippi. Lydia and her household believed the Word. Here we have the reason why the Holy Spirit did not allow Paul to preach in Asia. There was a bigger work to be done in Europe. This is the first time the Gospel had been preached in Europe. From Macedonia, the Gospel was carried up into central and northern Europe and hence to

America and around the world.

MEMORY VERSE: *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*

—*Psalm 32:8*

DAILY READINGS:

- Mon.—**James 3:13-18** True and false wisdom.
- Tue.—**Isaiah 55:6-13** Prosperity in godly work.
- Wed.—**Proverbs 11:12-23** Reward in sowing righteousness.
- Thu.—**Micah 6:8-16**. Futility of sowing wickedness.
- Fri.—**Proverbs 10:23-32** The wise sow righteousness.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 126 Happiness in work of God.

Timothy's Opportunity

Acts 16:1-5 Revisiting Derbe and Lystra with Silas, Paul finds Timotheus (Greek for Timothy). He was a disciple of Christ, and the son of Eunice (see **2 Timothy 1:5**), a Jewess, who, with her mother Lois, was probably saved under Paul's preaching on his first visit some years before. Probably Timothy was saved then also, for Paul calls him **my own son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2)**. **His father was a Greek**. To avoid opposition from Jews, Paul circumcised Timothy—not to save Timothy, but to gain the hearing of the Jews.

To go with Paul, hear him preach, see him work, and to work with him was a great opportunity and the best training Timothy could have had. To work with godly preachers, teachers, and workers, learning from them, having fellowship with them, is training of the greatest value. This, coupled with prayer and study, would produce some sorely needed great Gospel workers.

The Holy Spirit Closes One Way

Acts 16:6-8 Paul and company meant to visit points in Asia. The Holy Spirit forbade this. Obeying, they **came down to Troas**. Troas was the farthest western point in Asia. They were at their journey's end. They now needed special divine guidance to know where to go to preach. God had closed all doors without opening any new ones.

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While the Apostles' plans and God's plans coincided, the Spirit said nothing, silently guiding. When they differed, He spoke, first, to forbid remaining in Asia, then, to lead into Europe. He will use His power in our lives also. When He lives in a heart, He brings direction.

The Holy Spirit Opens Another Way

Acts 16:9-12 Waiting in Troas for God's direction, Paul received a vision. **There stood a man of Macedonia**, who said, **Come over into Macedonia and help us**. Paul knew this was God's Word directing him. They obeyed. It appears that Luke, the author of Acts, joined the company at Troas, for now for the first time he writes "we" in **verses 10-12**.

If God had not closed all other doors and then given Paul a vision, it is likely that he would never have gone into Europe. He would no doubt have concentrated his efforts on the churches of Asia. Sometimes God has a bigger work for us than we realize. **Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course . . . to Neapolis**. They lost no time in starting out. Neapolis was in Macedonia. **And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city . . . of Macedonia . . . And we were in that city abiding certain days**. There being no synagogue, they would have to find some other means of reaching the people. Conditions were so much different in this city that they had to spend some time in getting acquainted with conditions and planning their tactics.

Lydia Receives the Gospel

Acts 16:13-15 In Philippi they attended a meeting of women **by a river side. And a certain woman named Lydia . . . which worshipped God heard us**. Lydia was worshiping God, no doubt, to the best of the light she had. When the Apostles spoke, the Lord opened her heart. She listened, accepted, and obeyed. She **was baptized** in water as Jesus commanded (**Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16**) and as a symbol of her new birth. Note that **her household**, or family, were also saved, a tribute to her godly influence. She invited Paul and his brethren to stay in her home. She made them welcome to stay and preach the Gospel there.

It would seem that even back then, the women were more faithful in attending prayer meeting than were the men. So the work in Philippi started among the women who attended the prayer service. The mightiest thing done in Europe that day was when the Apostle slipped out in the early morning to a meeting place beneath the blue sky, by the side of the rushing stream, and there talked to the handful of women about the Savior of men's souls, Jesus Christ.

True worshipers of God know when they hear the Truth, and they respond to it. Those who only pretend to worship are apt to become heated from anger when they are faced with Gospel Truth.

God's Program

God has a program for His church. He has a better plan than man can form. It is a program, the details of which no one can guess. They must be revealed by the Spirit. No one could have guessed or reasoned out His plan to take the Gospel to Europe rather than farther into Asia. His plan is a simple plan, as we see in our lesson. It does not fit well with man's forms and pomp and earthly ambitions. If we drop our organizations and ceremonies and seek His way, He will reveal it.

Had Paul depended upon himself and closed his heart to the Spirit's voice, he would never have known his loss. He obeyed and waited for further leadings, and God richly fulfilled his expectations. We reap the benefits today.

JUST A THOUGHT

When the Spirit says NO, listen for His YES.

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