

FPFWC Christian Development



The Call of Women

February 2021

Winter Quarter

February 27, 2021

Lesson #4 – Called to Serve

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Acts 16:11-15,40; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30

Key Verse - 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.—Acts 16:15

ICE BREAKERS –

- 1. How important is it to show hospitality?**
- 2. In what ways is Lydia's example ones we should follow?**

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul and his companions began their second missionary journey around AD 52. It began with revisits to some of the cities Paul had visited on the first journey. These included Derbe, Lystra, and (perhaps) Iconium (Acts 16:1–2).

From there they headed west to Troas. While in Troas, Paul had a vision of a “man of Macedonia” who entreated him to come over to Macedonia and help (Acts 16:9). The vision served as a warrant for Paul to cross the Aegean Sea and enter Europe with the gospel—his first time to do so. Paul's initial visits to the cities of Philippi and Corinth both occurred during this trip.

The city of Philippi sat in a commanding position on the fertile plain of the Gangites River, surrounded by mountains on three sides. Its site is in the northeast quadrant of modern Greece. About 400 years old when visited by Paul, Philippi was a major Macedonian city. Philippi's name comes from King Philip II of Macedon, who conquered the city in 356 BC and renamed it for himself.

That was one of the first steps in Philip's domination of the entire Greek peninsula. It set the stage for his successor and son, Alexander the Great, to march east and conquer territories all the way to India. The gold mines for which the city of Philippi was known provided great wealth for both leaders to fund their military campaigns. But the apostle Paul was in search of gold of a different kind, and he found it.

LESSON COMMENTARY –

The Witness at Philippi (16:11–40)

In 16:11–40, Luke recorded that Paul began his Aegean campaign in Philippi, a strategic city on Egnatian Way (a major east-west road in the Roman Empire).

16:11–15. The missionaries sailed from Troas to **Samothrace** (an island approximately halfway to Neapolis) and then to **Neapolis** (a seaport 10 miles from

Philippi). At some point, Luke joined Paul and Silas, which is indicated by the plural pronoun **we**.

Philippi was named after Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, in about 356 BC, and had developed into a major city in the province of Macedonia. Under Roman rule it was a senatorial rather than imperial province, so the city had elected magistrates (see vv. 20, 22, 35–38).

On the Sabbath, the missionaries went to **a place of prayer**. Apparently the Jewish community was small, and there was only a place of prayer rather than a synagogue (some think the place of prayer was in a synagogue). Women were present for prayer. Though participation in worship was limited, women were permitted to pray. While Paul was speaking to the women, the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to respond to the gospel. Lydia is identified as a businesswoman from Thyatira who sold **purple fabrics**, which was the color of royalty and the rich. Purple cloth was extremely expensive because of the difficulty of producing the dye, which was made from mollusks (shellfish). Her name indicates she was a Gentile, so she was most likely a God-fearer (a Gentile who believed in God and followed the moral and ethical teachings of Judaism but was not a full convert). She was apparently single, perhaps a widow, since she was the head of her household, and they followed her lead in responding to the gospel. The evidence that Lydia's conversion was genuine was her offer of hospitality to the apostolic band. As did Peter (see 10:48), Paul and his companions stayed in the home of a Gentile convert.

16:35–40. The officials wanted to get Paul and Silas out of town quickly and quietly since the officials themselves had violated Roman law by arresting and punishing them without a trial. Paul, however, was not willing to allow these administrators to simply dismiss the issue. Since they had been publicly punished, Paul used the leverage of his Roman citizenship to force the officials to admit publicly that they had misused their authority.

Paul did not use his citizenship to “get even.” He forced the officials to admit their error to protect the new faith from becoming an unauthorized or unfavorable religious movement. Paul also met with the believers at Lydia's house to encourage them before leaving. He probably assured them that the officials would not punish them because of their faith in Christ.

The converts at Philippi were all completely different. Lydia was a successful businesswoman. The demon-possessed girl was a slave being exploited for profit. The Philippian jailer was a cog in the Roman machinery, afraid of losing his life. The conversion of these three individuals from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds is a testimony to the universal appeal and power of the gospel.

In this current time of social and ethnic diversity, believers also need to set an example of the power of Christ to unite rather than divide people by proclaiming the gospel to all people.

Luke, in 17:1–9, has given us only a brief summary of Paul's ministry in Thessalonica. Paul attempted to minister in the synagogue, but was forced to flee to Berea because of Jewish opposition. The courage Paul and his team showed was remarkable. After enduring the abuse in Philippi, they then walked about 70

miles to Thessalonica to continue their missionary endeavors, but with the wounds on their bodies not yet healed from the beating.

1:26–31. **For** (v. 26) begins an illustration of God’s powerful “foolishness” and “weakness” (v. 25) which are wiser and stronger than men. The very makeup of the Corinthian church, for whom God had done great things and through whom He was doing great things, is an indication of His power through those whom the world considers weak. Verses 27–28 indicate God’s design, which is to **shame** (“to confuse,” “to disgrace”) **the wise** and strong by choosing, using, and blessing the weak and foolish **so that no man may boast before God** (v. 29; cf. v. 31). God alone gets the credit (v. 31). Part of the reason Paul emphasized this was to cause the Corinthian faction leaders to quit drawing attention to themselves as secular sophists did, and recognize the supremacy of God in the world and the church. They were joined to **Christ Jesus** (v. 30) **by His doing**, not through any impressive ability of their own. Because of that connection with Jesus, believers recognize in Him God’s **wisdom**, His “impressive ability,” and receive His **righteousness, sanctification, and redemption**. **Righteousness** (God’s own moral excellence and virtue given to believers; see the comments on Rm 1:17; 3:21–31) comes to the believer because of being “in Christ.” Many deny the concept of “imputed righteousness,” and while Paul never used the exact term, he has a category for it (2Co 5:21; Php 3:9). **Sanctification** means “the status of being set apart and consecrated to God” with a life, it is hoped, of practical holiness that accompanies it. **Redemption** is “effecting the release of a slave or a prisoner of war by paying for that release.” Theologically, it refers to the deliverance of sinners from sin’s penalty and power by the blood of Jesus.

LESSON NUGGET - Paul opened his European ministry by attending a ladies’ prayer meeting! Lydia was a well-to-do merchant who had turned from pagan idolatry to worship the God of Israel. Not only did God open the doors for Paul to come to Europe, but He also opened Lydia’s heart and she was saved. She shared the message with her household and they were also saved. The fact that Paul had these new Gentile converts baptized is evidence that he was fulfilling the commission of Matt. 28:19–20.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament