

“LYDIA’S PROVOCATION”

Text: Acts 15:36 – Acts 16:15, 40

Subject: How Lydia Provokes Us To Spirituality (Or) “Grace Revealed Down By The River”

Introduction

1. Acts 15:36 – 18:22, is the account of Paul’s second missionary journey.
2. It is a journey that takes Paul from Antioch through Syria, through Asia Minor and into Europe.
3. He ministers in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Caesarea, Jerusalem and Antioch.

Question: How does Paul’s second missionary journey begin? (In an unusual way)

#1. There was contention (Acts 15:36-41)

- ◆ Paul and Barnabas agreed on the mission. (But disagreed on the personnel)
 - ◆ Paul felt that Mark wasn’t ready to go to Europe.
 - ◆ Barnabas felt that Mark was ready to go to Europe.
 - ◆ So holy conflict arose, and the sharp contention caused Paul to take Silas and Barnabas to take Mark.
 - ◆ The results from the division were redeemed, (as God still rules and overrules).
1. A former deserter (Mark) was reclaimed and set aflame for ministry by Barnabas.
 2. A new disciple was born (Silas) as Paul’s new companion in mission.
 3. A new missions team was founded.
 - ◆ Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus.
 - ◆ Paul took Silas and went into Syria and Alicia.
 4. Two cities would now be reached instead of one, as the gospel was spread a little farther.

Question: What’s the lesson?

Answer: ◆ That God rules and overrules, and differences of opinions are okay.
◆ That God can use conflict to accomplish His will when both parties want God’s will above everything else.

#2. There was strengthening (Acts 16:1-5)

- ◆ (V. 3) Paul took young Timothy as his helper.
- ◆ At Lystra, Paul took Timothy, ordained him to the ministry and then placed him as the pastor in Ephesus.
- ◆ It was a time (v. 5) when the churches were strengthened and increasing under Paul’s ministry, a time when God provided just what was needed.

#3. There was disappointment (Acts 16:6-11)

- ◆ In v. 6, Paul was kept from going where he intended to go (Asia Minor)- Westward.
- ◆ In v. 7, Paul was forbidden to go into Bithynia (which was Northward).
- ◆ In vs. 8 & 9, while journeying to Troas, the Spirit gave a vision of the man in Macedonia crying out, “Come over into Macedonia and help us”

(In Other Words)

- #1. God changed Paul’s plans and closed the door Westward.
- #2. God changed Paul’s plans (again) and closed the door Northward.
- #3. So, while Paul turns and goes in the only direction he can go (toward Troas close to the sea), he receives the call to Macedonia.

(What’s The Lesson Pastor?)

- #1. God will use the very things that disappoint us to increase His work within us. (Pg. 1 of 4)

- #2. God will close doors that we might want open, without giving us all the reasons behind it.
- #3. God's timing is just as important as God's will (Paul would later go to Asia, but not now).
- #4. God will close immediate doors before us, to open greater doors we cannot see.
- #5. God will break your heart temporarily, to protect you and shelter you permanently.

(How Does Paul's Journey Begin?)

- #1. There was **contention** (that God used for His ultimate glory).
- #2. There was **strengthening** (as Timothy was added to the team in Lystra).
- #3. There was **disappointment** (as doors were closed because God can see things ahead).
- #4. There was **victory** (vs. 6-40) in 3 ways:
 1. God saved a woman named Lydia.
 2. God saved a woman full of evil.
 3. God saved a jailor that was suicidal.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ God had a purpose for every discouraging closed door (to get Paul to Philippi so that God could go to work).

Fact: God used division for His ultimate glory.

Fact: God used young Timothy for His ultimate glory.

Fact: God used closed doors for His ultimate glory.

Fact: God used evil and prisoners for His ultimate glory.

Question: In fact, why did God allow Paul and Silas to be put in jail and inconvenienced?

Answer: To lead the Philippian jailor to the Lord and save His whole family!!!

(Now To Our Text Vs. 12-15)

(V. 12) "Finally from Troas into Philippi of Macedonia.

(V. 13) "On the Sabbath we went down by a river and spoke to a group of women".

(V. 14) "There was a woman named Lydia whose heart the Lord had opened".

(V. 15) "She was baptized and her household".

(Seems Strange Again Here)

Question: Who did Paul receive a vision about?

Answer: (V. 9) There stood a man in Macedonia saying "Come over here and help us".

Question: Who does Paul meet while looking for a man?

Answer: A woman instead, named Lydia.

Question: What does Lydia teach about our own relatives?

Question: Why such a coincidence that Paul runs into a woman in Philippi who is from Thyatira?

(“Secrets From The Riverbank”)

Fact: From Troas to Neapolis the Port of Philippi, it is 150 miles.

Fact: It takes Paul 2 days to make the journey.

Fact: Notice chapter 20:6, the same trip in the opposite directions takes 5 days later on.

Fact: But (in God's timing) it takes two days to encounter the first conversion in Europe.

Question: Where does the conversion take place?

Answer: In Philippi (a Roman Colony)

Question: Why Philippi?

Answer: It was the gateway to Europe!

- ◆ Located on the great Roman road known as the Egnatian Way.

- ◆ Named after Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander The Great.

- ◆ A Roman Colony, filled with businessmen and salesmen, who traveled all over the world.
- ◆ A place where God (in His wisdom) gives entrance of the gospel into Europe.

Question: What is it about Lydia, that provokes all of us to spirituality?

(Secrets From The Riverbank)

I. God Honors A Praying Spirit (V. 13)

- ◆ Paul and his friends rested a few days to prepare for ministry in (v. 12).
- ◆ Paul was patient and praying in his preparation.
- ◆ Then, on the Sabbath, Paul went out of the city by a river, where he attended a prayer service.

Question: Why women and not men?

Answer: The Jewish Law required ten men for the founding of a synagogue.

- ◆ Too small to establish a synagogue, there was a place of prayer out of town by the Gangites River.
- ◆ The river provided the water necessary for the ceremonial washings.
- ◆ Here, a group of women were gathered to pray.
- ◆ And God leads Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke out to group of praying women.

Question: Why send the gospel and surprise these women?

Answer: Because God sees the heart that is seeking in prayer. (Even down by the river)

Question: What is prayer?

Answer: It is communion of my soul with God. It is connecting with God's storehouse.
It is desire of intimacy with Jesus. It is fellowship from heart to heart.
It is union of my heart with God's heart.

- ◆ Lydia was a prayer!

II. God Honors A Worshipping Spirit (V. 14)

"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, from Thyatira, which worshipped God"

- ◆ Lydia was a professional woman. (A seller of purple fabric).
- ◆ Purple fabrics were in great demand in Rome. (Purple was a sign of royalty).
- ◆ And Lydia, had a business establishment in Thyatira (but was selling her product in Philippi)
- ◆ She was wealthy, had a large home to accommodate the church people, but was focused.

Question: What did this seller of purple do?

Answer: (V. 14) "Worshipped God"

- ◆ The Jews believed that God was alive.
- ◆ They Believed that God was actively involved in the lives of people.
- ◆ They worshipped God as pure and holy.

Question: What is worship?

Answer: It is the act of ascribing worthiness to God for who He is. (Psalm 95:6)

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Worship is my response to the Lord!
- ◆ Worship is my expression for His goodness!
- ◆ Worship is my gratefulness and thankfulness!
- ◆ Worship is my servanthood poured out!
- ◆ Worship is my life placed on the altar!

(Lydia Was A Worshipper)

III. God Honors A Receptive Spirit (V. 14)

(V. 14) "...which worshipped God, heard us"

- ◆ The word “Heard” (EKOUEEN) means:
 1. “To perk up and pay attention”
 2. “To listen and keep on listening”
 3. “To give utmost attention to the gospel”

It Means:

- ◆ To continue to keep on listening to the gospel being taught.
- ◆ It is a continuing on (without ceasing) to receive.
- ◆ It is a hearing of the gospel with the intent to do what it says.
- ◆ I call this a receptive spirit to the Lord’s Word.
- ◆ Wanting to learn and grow and change into the likeness of Jesus.

IV. God Honors An Obedient Spirit (V. 14)

(V. 14) “... she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul”

(V. 15) “And when she was baptized, and her household” **(In other words)**

- ◆ Lydia led her whole household to the Lord.
- ◆ Family members and relatives joined in.
- ◆ Lydia witnessed to and influenced all those related to her.
- ◆ She obeyed the Lord at Paul’s preaching without hesitation or reservation.

Question: Have you hesitated to obey the Lord in any area of your life?

Remember:

- ◆ “Obedience is the certificate of Christian character”. (A.W. Tozer)

V. God Honors A Servant’s Spirit (Vs. 15 & 40)

- ◆ In (v. 15), Lydia opens her home and uses her wealth for the Lord.
- ◆ In (v. 40), Lydia opens her home to the believers and Paul and Silas just released from prison.

Question: What is a servant?

Answer: The biblical word “Servant” means:

- ◆ One who advances others at the expense of themselves.
- ◆ One who cares less who gets the credit.
- ◆ One who doesn’t need to be thanked for their service.

Conclusion

Question: Who is it that opens the heart of every one of your friends and relatives?

Answer: (V. 14) “Whose heart the Lord opened” (Which Means:)

- ◆ **Only God** (by His Spirit) can open the heart of a person.
- ◆ **Only God** can get deep into the heart.
- ◆ **Only God** can bring heart change.
- ◆ **Only God** can deliver us from ourselves!

Altar Call!

AMEN!

Bill Kirk, Pastor