



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Women—The First Europeans Given the Gospel

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Acts 16:11-15 *“Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, 12) and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. 13) And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. 14) Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. 15) And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ So she persuaded us.” (NKJV)*

“NOW THE EXTRAORDINARY THING ABOUT PAUL’S WORK IN PHILIPPI IS THE AMAZING CROSS-SECTION OF THE POPULATION THAT WAS WON FOR CHRIST. THIS SECTION TELLS OF LYDIA AND SHE CAME FROM THE VERY TOP END OF THE SOCIAL SCALE. SHE WAS A PURPLE MERCHANT ... LYDIA WAS A WEALTHY WOMAN AND A MERCHANT PRINCE. SHE WAS WON FOR CHRIST.”
WILLIAM BARCLAY

Why does Luke call this the “foremost city of that part of Macedonia?” Why had Paul decided to stay there for a length of time? What was the singular emphasis of these devout women meeting by the river? How do we know that there were no men there? Who would have been the clientele of Lydia? Is it possible for a person to be saved without the Lord opening their eyes and heart to the Gospel? What was Lydia’s brilliant request that was impossible for the mission team to refuse? Was Lydia’s home the first church in all of Europe?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- FEBRUARY 8: ACTS 16:16-24 **PERSECUTION FOR FREEING A SLAVE GIRL FROM HER DEMON**
- FEBRUARY 15: ACTS 16:25-34 **PRODUCTIVE PRAYER MEETING PANDEMONIUM**

Paul’s second missionary journey would have brought great joy to his heart as every disappointment he had encountered was turned by God for his greatest good. He missed his initial partner, Barnabas, but now his team had been provided the greatest strength and variety. Paul was a rabbi who had grown up in Tarsus, a significant capital, and then had been trained at the feet of one of the greatest rabbis of his day, Gamaliel, and he was soon afterwards a member of the Sanhedrin (the Congress of Israel), at an early age. Silas was a Jew who had been trained in the very first church at Jerusalem at the feet of the Apostles, and was sent as a representative of the Jerusalem Council to Antioch of Syria. Timothy was half Jew and half Gentile, but had known and studied the Scriptures from his youth and was the protégé of Paul. Luke was a Medical Doctor, probably trained by Paul and Barnabas while in his hometown of Syrian Antioch, but was privileged to join the mission team after they had been directly led to the city where Luke currently lived. Luke had specifically embraced Paul’s calling by his vision in the night from the Macedonian man constantly begging him to “Come over to Macedonia and help us!”

“PAUL WAS IMPATIENT TO ARRIVE AT TOWNS OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE, IN WHICH RADIATING CENTRES OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE MIGHT BE ESTABLISHED.”
J. A. ALEXANDER

I. THE STRATEGIC PLACE

ACTS 16:11-12

Luke had spent a lot of time in this city by the time he writes this epistle of Acts. He was left here by Paul, presumably to pastor this Philippian church, and he is

BIBLE STUDIES

THURSDAY @ 6:30 AM –PRAYER MEETING – GAB 6TH FLOOR SPEAKER’S CONFERENCE ROOM

THURSDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – GAB 6TH FLOOR SPEAKER’S CONFERENCE ROOM

Virginia

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not picked up again by Paul until the end of his next missionary journey about five years later. This is the only city in which Luke specifically designates its strategic importance, calling it “*the foremost city of that part of Macedonia.*” Most significantly, Philippi had gold mines then producing one thousand talents of gold annually, in value today to over \$2,323,200,000.00 each year. This is probably why two battles for the Roman Empire was won with the help of the men of Philippi, so they were all made citizens of Rome, and it became a Roman Colony, given all the privileges and protections of Rome, had no taxes, enjoyed immediate access to the Emperor, the Roman Egnatian Way went right through the middle of their city, enjoyed legal ownership rights like Italy, and was basically a miniature Rome with much greater wealth. It was certainly favored with the best status a provincial city could obtain in the empire. Paul and his team sought to see this great city become a lighthouse for Jesus Christ.

These women had been diligent in prayer for some time and now the Lord is answering their prayers and providing them with the truth of God’s Word that will transform their lives forever.

“IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT THE FIRST PEOPLE PAUL
PREACHED TO IN EUROPE WERE WOMEN.”

JOHN MACARTHUR

III. THE SELLER OF PURPLE

ACTS 16:14-15

Lydia had probably led this prayer group meeting by the river. She was from Thyatira, the location of one of the seven churches found in Revelation (2:18-29). Thyatira was known for its purple fabrics which were so expensive that they were only worn by royalty and the extremely wealthy as a status symbol. Thus, selling such purple fabrics was a very lucrative business and brought the dealer in contact with the wealthiest of society. This is why Lydia has a house large enough to host the mission team of four men in addition to all her help with the business. She was literally “*continually worshipping God.*” This was the term for a Gentile who worshipped the one true God of Israel, but had not yet embraced Judaism. Most importantly, “*The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.*” Only the Lord can do this transforming work in a person’s heart. When Lydia’s life showed that she had received the truth of the Gospel, “*she and her household were baptized.*” Not only had she believed, but she had influenced all those who were in her family and worked with her to believe along with her! Lydia wanted to learn continually from this team and also demonstrate her gratitude for bringing her the Gospel, but she must have sensed that Paul would be reluctant to accept her hospitality, so she asks in a way in which they could not deny her request, “*So she persuaded us.*”

“THE EXPRESSION *LEADING PERHAPS REFERS TO THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES (A FAMOUS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE) AND THE FLOURISHING ECONOMY (PROCEEDS FROM THE GOLD MINES) OF PHILIPPI, RATHER THAN ITS ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTION.*”

SIMON KISTEMAKER

II. THE SABBATH PRAYER

ACTS 16:13

There is an important similarity with these in Philippi who met by the river on the Sabbath and the very first church—the Scriptures indicate prayer as their singular focus (Acts 1:14). And just as the first church at Jerusalem enjoyed an overwhelming answer to prayer on the day of Pentecost, so these women also enjoyed the greatest answer to prayer in the form of a visiting Rabbi, Paul, and his team, giving them the truth of the Gospel. The tense of the verb shows that this place outside the city by the stream was continually being a place of prayer, meaning that this was not a new startup prayer group.

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Are you a strategic witness in that you pray for and give the Gospel even to those who are above you in leadership?
- 2) Is your life characterized by prayer and particularly leadership in prayer at whatever opportunities you are given?
- 3) Have you received Christ as your Lord and Savior like Lydia and are you influencing others for Christ as she did?