

THE REST OF THE STORY

Studies in the Book of Acts

***“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it –
but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”***

Vance Havner

Text

Acts 16:1-15

Topic

Paul sets out on his second mission's trip and is eventually led by the Holy Spirit to Macedonia where he shares the Gospel with Lydia by the river outside of Philippi

Title

The Best Macedonian for the Job is a Woman

Acts 16:1 Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, *the* son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* Greek.

Acts 16:2 He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

Acts 16:3 Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

Acts 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

Acts 16:5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Acts 16:6 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

Acts 16:7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

Acts 16:8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

Acts 16:9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Acts 16:10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:11 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next *day* came to Neapolis,

Acts 16:12 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.

Acts 16:13 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*.

Acts 16:14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us*. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

Acts 16:15 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.

Introduction

In 2003 then Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge announced the *Ready America* campaign which is designed to inform us and prepare us for a chemical, biological, or nuclear attack. The campaign brochure says, "Preparing makes sense. Get ready now."

Our text reads like a Christian 'get ready' campaign. Only it isn't disaster that you are to get ready for; it's reaching out with the Gospel. We see Paul get ready to reach out to those he will encounter on his second mission's trip; and we see that those he encounters have been readied by God to hear the good news that their sins can be forgiven.

Preparing makes sense. Get ready now. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Get Yourself Ready To Reach Out, and #2 Reach Out To Those God Has Readied.

#1 Get Yourself Ready to Reach Out (v1-10)

We're picking-up the story as Paul and Silas set out from Calvary Chapel of Antioch to return to the churches Paul and Barnabas established on their first mission's trip. First stop on the itinerary: **Derbe and Lystra**.

Acts 16:1 Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, *the* son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* Greek.

Acts 16:2 He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

Acts 16:3 Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

We're introduced to Timothy. He was probably saved on Paul's first visit to these cities. Later in the New Testament we learn that his mother's name was Eunice and his grandmother's name was Lois (2Timothy 1:5). It highlights the importance of maintaining a godly home.

Timothy is a very important character in the New Testament. Paul credits him with participating in six of the New Testament letters. Two additional letters were written to him. The rearing of his mom and grandma, and his own getting ready, put him in a place where he could be used by God.

Readiness begins at home. Your first emphasis in the home and towards your kids must be spiritual.

Paul felt led to ask Timothy to accompany he and Silas. It tells me Timothy had made himself ready. He had no idea Paul was coming back through town. The 'job' wasn't posted on any message board. But when the opportunity came Timothy was ready to be used by God. - *being changed to bring change* -

Throughout this text we'll see that getting ready was a way of life. These guys didn't sit around doing nothing until an opportunity presented itself. They stayed ready at all times and were able to move when God called.

Timothy wasn't totally ready. The particular mission he was asked to accompany involved ministry to Jews. Since he was half-Jewish, the Jews they would encounter would expect him to be circumcised. If not, he would be offensive to them. They would not listen to him or to Paul and Silas.

Paul had just played a key role in the church council at Jerusalem where it was decided by the Holy Spirit that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. But we also learned that love for others

should govern our behavior. Timothy was saved; he did not need to be circumcised for salvation. But he did need to be circumcised if he wanted to minister the Gospel among Jews.

Timothy was more than willing to undergo circumcision for the sake of the Gospel. He wanted to be ready to reach out to the Jews.

It begs the question: What am I willing to undergo in order to get ready to tell others about Jesus? Is there something I need to 'cut-out' of my life in order to be heard?

Acts 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

Not only could they **deliver the decrees**. Timothy was a living example! You are saved by grace alone through faith alone. Once saved, you choose to limit your liberty by the love you have to reach out to others – both in the church and in the world.

I think that wherever we are God wants to illustrate something through us by using us as an example. Whether people get the illustration or not isn't the point. Getting myself ready so that God can illustrate something through me is the point.

Acts 16:6 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

Acts 16:7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

Acts 16:8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

The **Holy Spirit** was forbidding them to go to certain cities. How? It may have been through the gift of prophecy; or by an inner awareness; or by outward circumstances. The point is that God must direct you in your service.

Desire and need are not always indicators that God is leading:

1. I might desire to be involved in a certain ministry or mission; but I am a servant and must be directed by God.

2. There may be a need in some area – whether a real need or a perceived need. Still I am not free to ‘meet’ the need unless and until God directs me.

If we are not led by the Holy Spirit we will both establish ministries God never ordained; and we will overlook serving in ways He has ordained.

Paul and his companions did not have to be stirred-up to serve. They had to be restrained and redirected! If I am not experiencing closed doors than I may not be ready to serve. Again we note that these guys were ready, serving, and staying ready to serve in new fields.

[Acts 16:9](#) And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

[Acts 16:10](#) Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Did you notice that Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, said [we sought to go to Macedonia](#). He became a traveling companion of Paul's at this point. But for these hindrances Luke may not have become available to join them. Had Paul ignored the closed doors and crashed through them Luke may not have become the author of the Book of Acts and the Gospel of Luke.

For his part Luke was ready to leave what he was doing to - accompany Paul. Whatever his medical practice was at that time he became a missionary doctor.

[Macedonia](#) was in the Roman province of Asia – what we would call Turkey. They set out [immediately](#). You get the idea that their bags were packed.

Some of you are on call for your job. You might have a ‘ready-bag’ that contains the things you might need. You're ready at a moments notice to respond. That's the way we want to be ready to serve our Lord.

We are living in the Last Days. The rapture of the church is imminent. Nonbelievers are all around us. If ever a generation needed to keep a spiritual 'ready-bag,' it's ours!

Immediately after Homeland Security announced *Ready America* Wal-Mart reported a huge increase nationwide in the purchase of things like duct tape, bottled water, and first-aid kits. Not for long, though, as over time people felt less need to be prepared.

It can happen to us as Christians. We want to get ready and stay ready but life starts to interfere. The message today from our text is to maintain a heightened state of readiness.

While I am getting and staying ready, *God is readying people I will encounter.*

#2 Reach Out To Those God Has Readied (v11-15)

Every now and then God seems to be leading in a way that makes you feel something amazing is about to happen. It is – but God's definition of 'amazing' isn't always what we're expecting. We see something like that as the team travels to Macedonia.

[Acts 16:11](#) Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next *day* came to Neapolis.

[Acts 16:12](#) 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.

A Roman [colony](#) was a city that had been granted special privileges by Rome because of some service it had rendered. In addition Luke called Philippi [the foremost city of that part of Macedonia](#). It wasn't the capital, but it was the most important city in the region.

I think Luke was communicating the build-up the missionaries were feeling. Certainly God had something amazing in mind!

Then we read,

Acts 16:13 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*.

Paul's mission strategy, given to him by the Holy Spirit, was to go into the synagogues of the cities he visited and preach to the Jews. But in Philippi he **went out of the city to the riverside**. It meant that there were not even ten male Jews in Philippi to form even one synagogue!

Any Jews who were in the region would gather at the **riverside** where there was running water to perform various ceremonial rituals. Paul and company traveled about a mile outside the city and discovered a few **women** meeting there for **prayer**.

The Macedonian man... **was a woman!** But, as we'll see, the best Macedonian for the job *was* a woman.

Acts 16:14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us*. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

Lydia was a traveling saleswoman. **Purple** dye, made from a certain mollusk, was extremely expensive. One use of it was for the stripes in the togas of Roman senators. Lydia's occupation suggests that she had considerable wealth.

- being changed to bring change -
Paul joined the worshippers and shared the Gospel. **The Lord opened her heart** and she was saved. I read that to teach God is busy readying the hearts of nonbelievers to hear the Gospel.

The Holy Spirit is active in the world seeking to reveal Jesus to people. Through creation, through conscience, and through circumstances; hearts are being readied.

All the people we encounter we might want to consider as being readied by God. We don't know what is going on in their lives or when there might be an opening to share how much Jesus loved them at the Cross.

Acts 16:15 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.

They may have been **baptized** right then! Baptism was not necessary for salvation, but the first Christians held it in high regard.

Her **household** servants also believed and were **baptized**. No classes; no discipleship. Paul took them at their word that they had received Jesus Christ. Sure there are always people who merely profess to be saved. But I think sometimes we are so skeptical that we make it hard for a person to be saved.

Lydia was quite the saleswoman. The question she asked Paul and company was persuasive. It was like the close at a sales call. How could they refuse?

She immediately began serving the Lord – in her case through hospitality. Once saved a new believer needs to associate with the church and get involved at some level.

Paul was ready. So were Silas, Timothy, and Luke. Lydia and her household were readied. The convergence brought salvation, joy, and glory to God.

You are on a more informal, but no less important, mission. Unless you have totally ignored the Lord, you are probably in your Philippi. The people around you are the ones God has readied or is readying.

Pray that God would open the door to their heart so that you might talk with them about Jesus!