

# Paul's Second Missionary Journey: Antioch to Philippi--Acts 16:6-15

by J.R. Miller

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*God's guidance is essential in our work, and prompt obedience to his call leads to greater blessings and fruitfulness.*

**Scripture:** Acts 16:6

**Topics:** "Divine Guidance", "Immediate Obedience"

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## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of following God's guidance in our lives, as demonstrated by Paul's second missionary journey. He highlights how God sometimes shuts doors to lead us to more significant opportunities, as seen when Paul was called to Macedonia. The sermon illustrates the immediate response of Paul to God's call and the impact of Lydia's conversion, showcasing the importance of being present in places of worship to receive blessings. Miller encourages believers to act promptly in their faith and to share the gospel with their families and communities. The message concludes with the reminder that true faith manifests in love and kindness towards others.

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## Transcript

Paul was "forbidden by the Holy Spirit from preaching the Word in the province of Asia". We would say there is no place where one should not be glad to preach. But we see here that sometimes, even where there are people who need the Word, it may not be our duty to speak to them. God shuts doors--as well as opens them. We are not to do whatever work we find for ourselves--but what God gives us to do. Opportunities are not always doors of duty. There are needy places to which we are not to go--some other one must go to these, while we pass on to farther fields. We must then be as ready to accept the Lord's restraints, as his leadings forward.

One night Paul had a vision. He saw a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us!"

Twice in the preceding verses, have we seen doors shut, because the Lord did not wish Paul to enter them, having other work waiting for him a little farther on. Now a great door was opened. There was a large and needy field lying beyond in the darkness. The gospel had never yet crossed over into Europe, and now God wanted Paul to carry it there. That is why he had hindered him from entering the other fields. So for all of us--some doors are shut and others opened. No vision may come to guide us in our work--but

there will always be some kind of guidance if we are ready to go wherever God wants us to go.

Paul understood it now, and was eager to go into Macedonia. He was sure God had called him. "Immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia." This is a splendid example. Mark the word "Immediately." There was no loitering. The moment the Master called--the servant was ready. We should always promptly and cheerfully go wherever God sends us. We can never know what will come out of our doing just what he wants us to do, even though it be not what we would choose to do. Who can tell the result of Paul's crossing into Europe that day? He took Christianity there, and it became a power for blessing to all the Western world! Does there never break on our ears the cry, "Come over . . . and help us"? There certainly are human needs somewhere that appeal to us; what shall our answer be?

Paul's first preaching in Europe, was to a mere handful of godly women. It seemed a small beginning--but it was like a little spring from the mountains which are the source of a mighty river. No one can ever estimate the extent or the value of the influences which took their rise in that women's prayer meeting. Lydia was in the right place that day, too. She was in the place of blessing. It surely paid her well to shut up her shop and keep the Sabbath. Had she been absent for any reason from that service--she would have missed a great blessing which might never have come to her again. If we would make sure of receiving all the blessings God wants to give us--we must always be at the place of duty. It is never safe to stay away even once, from the Sunday school, or the church, or the prayer meeting, for that may be the time when some special blessing will be there for you!

"One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." First, she listened while the apostle preached. Then the Lord opened her heart, yet in a certain sense she opened it herself. She never would have been saved--if there had been no divine hand at the door. The Lord has many ways of opening people's hearts.

"She was baptized." She did not wait until she had a certain experience as a Christian; she at once made confession of Jesus as her Savior, and herself as one of the friends and followers of Jesus. She did not try to be a Christian quietly, with no public confession, no declaration of her intention. She made her confession at once, and was the first person in Europe to become a Christian and to be baptized. She did the right thing. There should not be one hour's delay when one has decided to accept Christ. There is no place provided in the gospel, for secret discipleship, and dallying is always perilous. There are many people who are trying to be Christians--but hesitate about the public act of confessing Christ, and delay, thinking that by and by they will be better able to live a Christian life. But the whole New Testament is against any such delaying.

"When she was baptized, and her household, she begged us, come into my house, and abide there." Lydia promptly showed her faith by her works, and by her changed life. Not only did she become a Christian herself; she also brought her family with her. Everyone who is saved, ought to try to bring his family and his friends, also, to Jesus. Every parent who receives Christ, should strive to bring his children with him.

Another immediate fruit of her conversion, was her hospitality to the missionaries. Believing in Christ warms our hearts toward all Christ's friends. Love for Jesus--makes us love those who are his disciples. For his sake we want to show kindness to others. This is one of the surest marks of the Christian life. If the cruel man still remains cruel after professing to follow Christ, there must be something wrong; his heart

has not admitted Christ. A man ought to be better, gentler, kindlier, even to his dog or his horse, after he has Christ in his heart. Especially must he be gentler and kindlier to other people, to other Christians, to the sick, to the poor, the weak, and the troubled.

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