



Lesson 13 February 27th, 2021

Lydia: Called to Serve

MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL

Study Scripture – Acts 16:11-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30

Background Scripture – Acts 16; 1 Corinthians 1

Key Verse:

And when (Lydia) and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and stay". And she prevailed upon us.

Acts 16:15

INTRODUCTION

Heart Surgery.

This is an extremely important Study for it looks at a remarkable woman who benefited from heart surgery performed by God.

We have looked in a previous lesson at how God performed heart surgery on an extremely talented, eloquent, man blessed with great intellect and abilities using a believing woman called Priscilla.

Now we are going to look at how God performed heart surgery through the instrumentality of the Apostle Paul, Luke, Timothy, and Titus, his traveling companions.

When we look at the biblical text, we see many women on whom God had performed necessary heart surgery. We remember Eve our mother, Ruth the Moabitess, Deborah the first noted female public servant and prophetess, and Abigail, the beautiful woman with a beautiful brain, a woman of good understanding with a beautiful countenance, showing that beauty and brains can go together. And among them we see Elizabeth, whose son was John the Baptist the noblest man of all, Mary the mother of our Lord, and Mary Magdalene.

Of course, there are very many noted woman in Scripture we have not mentioned on whom God performed heart surgery but these women all stand as a model for women and for men.

Our focus today is on Lydia, a successful businesswoman who made her living providing services and materials for the rich and famous. But though she had business activities with these people who were clearly pagan and enemies of God, she was successful in her business enterprises, which of course implied that she was a woman with great intellect and ability. She loved the Lord God of Israel. Her business associations did not turn her away from the Lord God.

Our Lesson today looks at how the Holy Spirit sometimes works in our lives; starting great things such as the entrance of the Gospel into Europe from small, apparently unremarkable conversations.

Paul and Barnabas as well as the other prophets listed in Chapter 15 were teaching and exhorting the brethren, when we are told in verse 36 that Paul suggested:

“Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they do.”

This seemingly minor event was important, for it started to influence and change the whole course of western civilization.

The European tribes were then all pagan and some of them were quite uncivilized. The coming of the Gospel revolutionized that continent in every respect.

Acts chapter 16, the background to today’s Study, chronicles the continued work of the Spirit in the lives of a group of believers, now missionaries in the ever-expanding church of Jesus Christ. This second missionary tour was to start as a tour of encouragement, but problems immediately surfaced. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark who had deserted the missionary party in Pamphylia and Paul refused since he did not trust the young and clearly fearful Mark. The result was an extremely sharp disagreement. The Spirit led one missionary to hold onto and encourage an immature and weak brother in Christ (actually a close family member), while the other missionary was led by the Spirit to encourage the churches previously established. So, Barnabas took Mark and went to work in Cyprus, while Paul took the more mature Silas the prophet and went through Syria and Cilicia.

This clearly was not the ‘Plan A’ but under ‘Plan B’ the Spirit gave the weak and immature novice the opportunity to continue in his spiritual growth, so that about ten years later he would rejoin Paul as a fully mature and strong co-worker in Christ.

Note therefore that the Holy Spirit does not cast the young aside but will work with the young to develop their understanding and place them firmly on the path of spiritual maturity.

The Chapter recounts a part of Paul’s second missionary journey and introduces us to the particular circumstances of a young disciple named Timothy; whom Paul will recruit for their mission. The salvation of three individuals; a slave-girl, a jailer and his household and Lydia and her household are also recorded.

In between we see the constant presence of the Holy Spirit prompting, leading and directing Paul and his party, as well as Barnabas and the young John Mark. The Spirit knows all things, without exception. Nothing surprises Him. He was ready to deal with the situation when Paul and Barnabas disputed.

We should note carefully how the Spirit continued to direct everything that happened; remembering that the missionary party had only intended to visit the churches that have been established on the first journey, but God had other plans.

Our Study focus is on Lydia but the experiences of the missionary party prior to their arrival in Philippi, the present domicile of Lydia gives much food for thought. Paul and his companions had set-out to revisit the churches they had planted on his first missionary journey (15:36).

The missionaries had been strengthened by the decisions of the Jerusalem Council where the Church, the Apostles, and its leaders argued over the need for Gentiles to be circumcised and to obey Jewish ritual laws in order to be saved and be called full believer in the Lord Jesus Christ (15:22-31). They traveled throughout many cities, advising the churches of the Council's decrees. The churches were strengthened as a result of these visits and membership increased daily. This was evidence of the Holy Spirit continued work (16:4-5). For these missionaries, strengthening the existing churches was very important and went side by side with new mission activity.



Of note is Luke's record of this particular act on the part of Paul's missionary party.... *as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem (16:4)*. This along with the circumcision of Timothy (16:3) are just two of the many Texts that give the lie to those who would have us believe Paul was at odds with the other Apostles on doctrinal issues and necessarily had a problem with Jewish traditions. Then at some point along what would have been their logical route, we are told: *Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.*

Here is a picture of a party of missionaries trying again and again to enter an area to minister and the Holy Spirit forbidding them. It must have been a puzzling and baffling experience for them. Without a doubt Asia needed the Gospel, but this was not in God's timing.

Note, perceived need on the part of the unsaved or logic, should not drive our outreach efforts but within the scope of the 'great commission', the Holy Spirit is the Administrator of missions. He is the One who is seen forbidding, guiding, directing, opening and closing doors. As a result, the party will make a left turn (west), taking a totally unplanned path and head to Europe with the gospel; rather than continue in Asia as they had planned.

As noted in previous lessons, the Book of Acts is essentially the record of the Spirit's work through the Apostles and early church and this chapter 16 no less so.

The Lesson here for believers is an awareness of the critical importance of the Holy Spirit orchestrating our evangelistic efforts, individually and corporately. Clearly there are ups and downs in evangelism, but it is imperative for God's missionaries to follow His directions, even though they might have other preferences.

We will also note that the group did not sit back and wait for the Holy Spirit to take them by the hand but in obedience to Jesus' commands, pressed forward in other directions, whenever one avenue was blocked. In all their efforts, there was an underlying submission to the leading and guidance of the Spirit; He is confirming or denying all their moves. This close relationship is only possible with those who are *filled with the Spirit*.

Our Study will officially mark the introduction of the Gospel to Europe and a most worthy candidate Lydia, will be among the first converts. She is said to have '*worshipped God*', a great tribute to any human being. As our Study unfolds, we will see that God has already prepared the hearts of those who will respond to the Gospel call. Our part is to deliver and substantiate that message with holy lives.

THE TEXT

Verse 1-5. These verses deal with the personal circumstances of the young Timothy and his recruitment to Paul's team, on this their second missionary journey. Timothy, it would appear, must have been quite young at this time, since Paul addressed him as 'young man' several years



after, when he asked Timothy to oversee the Church at Crete. For even then, he appeared to be still so young there was a concern his youth might hinder his ability to fill the office, (1 Tim.4:12). Even at this young age the Text calls him a *disciple* and Timothy had already established a fine Christian reputation that went beyond his own town and showed great promise as a future 'soldier' of Christ; something Paul perceived. Interestingly Paul had earlier strongly rejected taking another evangelist along and here we find him actively recruiting someone and this speaks to the Christian character of Timothy.

Timothy's mother was Jewish, but his father Greek and Timothy was not circumcised. Paul had him circumcised, likely to facilitate his ministry in the synagogues and among Jews. Later Paul will adamantly refuse to circumcise another of his companions Titus, since he was a Gentile. Paul and his party continued along their circuit visiting various churches and delivering the edicts of the apostles and Jerusalem council, regarding those matters that had earlier caused many disputes among the brethren, (Acts 15). The result was that *the churches were established in the faith and increased in number daily*. That is, the uncertainties were dispelled, and the apostles' doctrine was confirmed and accepted by the brethren.

We have to conclude that it was the Holy Spirit that prompted this trip in the first place (15:36) and all that had transpired to this point was with His approval and under his direction.

Verse 6. Starting from their home church in Antioch the party had travelled in a generally north-westerly direction and continued along that path after leaving Derbe and Lystra. They were then not allowed to preach the gospel in 'Asia'. Asia here does not refer to the continent, but to the Roman province of that name. The seven cities mentioned in Revelation 2-3: Ephesus, Sardis, Smyrna, Philadelphia, Laodicea and Pergamum and Thyatira were located in this province. It is not to be understood that the Gospel was not preached in any part of Asia, for in fact they had to this point, only preached in Asia.

We are not sure how the Spirit stopped their plan as to where to go but they clearly received the message. The Spirit might have communicated in some indirect manner (Acts 20:23 or through some recognized prophet, (Acts 21:10).

From this, Christians are to be reassured that when one is under the control of or *filled with the Spirit*, then one can confidently expect to receive the Spirit's guidance in carrying out the work of God. The Gospel was eventually preached in all of Asia with great success and our attitude must be to press on with the 'great commission' under the direction of the Spirit, while recognizing the important element of God's timing.

Verses 7-8. Paul and his companions then veered somewhat to the west, after their attempts to continue north or east were blocked by the Spirit and so they arrived at Troas. The Spirit was directing Paul toward Greece and westward from Asia, where he had intended to remain. Paul was about to take the Gospel across to Europe.

It is interesting to note here that we have no record of the party putting any kind of a halt to their evangelistic efforts; for they knew they had been sent to proclaim the gospel of salvation. The driving force was the Holy Spirit, and the understanding was, if He closed one door, He would open another. So, if one is operating according to the commandments of God, one only need to continue, confident God will provide the 'hands-on' direction as it becomes necessary. Note, some translations render the *Spirit* in verse 7 as the 'Spirit of Jesus'. One writer comments on this point:



The Spirit of Jesus is here recognized as exactly the same as the Spirit of God, indicating forcefully that the full deity and godhead of Jesus Christ was fully accepted and received by the Christians at that mid-point of the first century. Plumtree stresses the dogmatic importance of this verse as:

Confirming the doctrine that the Holy Spirit stands in the same relationship to the Son as to the Father and may therefore be spoken of either as the Spirit of God, or of Christ (Romans 8:9), or of Jesus.

Verse 9-10. The team is at Troas, an Asian port city across an arm of the Aegean Sea from Macedonia and continental Europe. Paul had a vision and saw *a man of Macedonia* begging him to come over and help them. The man was recognized as Macedonian, maybe by his dress, language or some other means.

It is hard to know if this was a dream or some conscious communication. Either way, after the group discussed and considered the vision and their recent experiences in 'Asia', there was a strong consensus that the Spirit was directing them to preach the Gospel in Macedonia.

.... *Help us* was indeed a cry to come and preach the gospel to us!

A writer comments on these verses:

Here is an instance in which God evidently spoke to Paul subjectively, by means of a vision; but the element of uncertainty persists in the fact that they "concluded" that God's message was in the vision, making the decision to rest, in part, upon their deduction, and not as being based on a firm command of the Father. Regarding the prohibitions which had been placed in Paul's way, forbidding his preaching in Asia and then in Bithynia, and the natural deduction from themselves that they should not return to lands already evangelized, and all this coupled with the instance of Paul's vision; it is not amiss to discover in the providential guidance thus given Paul a substantial amount of deliberate judgment and common sense; nor does this deny the fact that God actually guided them; it is the manner of his doing so which is apparent here.

Macedonia then occupied a large area of what would be modern-day southeast Greece. It was an ancient kingdom, which under Philip and then Alexander, had conquered all of Greece, then Persia and Western Asia and had spread the Greek language and customs all over the known world. It was the first region in Europe in which we have any record that the Gospel was preached.

Of note, Luke the writer of Acts refers to the group as '*we*' rather than the '*they*' he had previously been using; thus, indicating that he joined the party at this point, in Troas. Actually, by using the word *us* with *to preach* has some believing Luke himself was a preacher of the gospel.

Convinced that God was directing them to preach in Macedonia, they immediately arranged to set sail for the place.

The question that we now face is why God did not in the first place give Paul this vision while he was in Antioch, telling him that He wanted him to go to Macedonia. That would have been easier, instead of taking the long way to delivering the apostolic letter they could have avoided travelling the three hundred miles from Iconium to Troas and the doors closed without explanation.

It appears that sometimes God lets us experience lack of success, closed doors and difficult relationships, instead of nice simple relationships, instead of making it easy for us and giving us



clear and obvious directions. One explanation seems to be that God wants our faith in Him to grow and mature. He does things in such a way that when we experience failures and disappointments, we will find that He proves Himself trustworthy.

Verse 11-12. The party took decisive action once convinced the Spirit desired them to preach in Macedonia. They seemed to have sailed the shortest distance from Troas to Macedonia; except for a stop on the small island of Samothracia. They practically sailed a straight line across that part of the Aegean known as the Dardanelles, also called the Hellespont. Landing at Neapolis on mainland Macedonia they continued inland to Philippi.

By the time of Paul, Philippi had become the chief city in the region and a Roman colony with many privileges; notably that of citizenship and was provided with military roads and fortifications.

It was famous for having been the place where several important battles were fought in the Roman civil wars between the axis of Brutus and Cassius, the murderers of Julius Caesar and the forces of Anthony and the man later to become Emperor Augustus.

The Philippians had helped the army of Augustus and in gratitude he made them Roman citizens and made this city a little piece of Rome. It was to the church in this city that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Philippians.

The problem was then how to start a work among people in this proud, strange, pagan city; so, the missionaries spent some days 'scoping' the city. We do not know what their expectations were. It was likely that in view of 'the call' they expected that this was fertile ground, but they might have had misgivings given the kind of city this was. So, they spent time exploring.

It is always a good idea to familiarize one's self with new surroundings and circumstances, before striking out in all directions at once; and we can be assured they were under the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Still, one might have expected them to be immediately plunged into feverish evangelistic activities, given their dramatic call in Asia. We are told however that they stayed in the city for some time. Our expectations and approaches however must at all times be in line with and according to the timing of the Holy Spirit, as Paul and his companions demonstrated.

The missionaries obviously found out that there was no synagogue established in Philippi where Jews, and those who were attracted to follow Judaism called God fearers, could gather, read the Scriptures and worship. Ten adult male Jews were all that was needed to establish a synagogue, but it seemed the Jewish population was too small even to meet this requirement. The Law had provided that if they were not enough worshipping Jews, those living in that place should meet to worship by a river. This would explain the missionaries having to go outside the city to a riverside, to find a place of worship. This would have been a known place where people were accustomed to meet. Meeting beside the river would enable the ceremonial washings that preceded any Jewish worship service.

Knowledge of this place of worship likely came about from inquiries they had made in the city and naturally the Sabbath would be the day to find 'God worshippers' of all stripes gathering for the purpose. Note even at this stage of the church's growth, it was still Paul's habit to first seek out the Jews whenever he came to a new city.

Paul and his group might have been delighted to learn that there was some Jewish worship after all, but to their surprise they found that there were only a small group of women



worshipping. But Paul was not biased. He had no objection to starting a church from a group of ladies.

One writer comments on verse 13:

“Now, wait a minute! This is about as perfect an anticlimax as can be imagined. The Apostle has had the romance of a heavenly vision, and the romance of a heavenly vision was the mission of a man from Macedonia, saying, “Come over and help us”.

I can imagine Paul, if he was like so many preachers, he might have thought, “The crowds in Europe are waiting to hear me. They have heard about me”. And so, he comes; and the day comes to go out to the synagogue, and they discover they don't have enough men of Jewish extraction in the city of Philippi to have a synagogue. It was required in rabbinic law that if there were 10 Jewish men in one locality, they had to form a synagogue. So, there were not even 10 Jewish men. They had a little prayer enclosure, by the side of the Gangitis River, probably a dirty little enclosure, and there the women were meeting. And instead of the man of Macedonia, and the crowds of men before the Apostle's eyes, what does he reach? A few woman sitting by the river, the synagogue's lady's auxiliary.

That often happens to a preacher, you know. A young man, going to seminary, he is all fire, “God has called me to the Ministry”, and he thinks, “I have a great a great ministry to perform”. And so, he goes out to his first position and he discovers, he comes in on the middle of the week, and he comes in in time for the prayer meeting and he goes in with a great deal of enthusiasm and expectation and finds 22 people in the prayer meeting, of which, 18 are women.

So often true in our churches-- where are the men? Where are they? Well, they have more important things to do than prayer. They have their business to think about. They have to think about that; after all, everything depends on them and what they do in the business world. Doesn't it? Doesn't it? Come on! Doesn't it? No. Of course, it doesn't. They would do a whole lot better in business if they were into meetings of the Lord”.

This is a clear call to YOUNG MEN.

There were only women at the gathering and from the name of the chief woman mentioned these seemed to be proselytes (Gentiles who converted to Judaism) rather than Jewish women. The missionaries were not discouraged at this small inauspicious beginning but sat down and spoke to the women present.

The atmosphere was as called for in the Law, and the missionaries presented Jesus to a humble congregation. They preached as was their custom to the most available people. They presented the Gospel, obviously in straightforward and direct fashion to these devout and faithful women. Note that these few women were not ashamed of their faith and their reputation had spread among the pagan, gentile and Roman populace. Their small numbers did not diminish their obvious faithfulness. Neither did this small numbers deter Paul from opening the Scriptures and introducing the women to the Messiah.

Note that it is our responsibility to preach and teach the Word when we have an opportunity to do so. We do not have the ability to open peoples' hearts. Rather, our responsibility is to be there, at the scene, sow the seed, leave without worrying. The Holy Spirit will produce the crop without failing, as he wills.

Verse 14. Among the women was Lydia, a businesswoman who traded in *purple*



(dye/garments). *Purple* was an expensive purple dye made from a shellfish and was used to dye cloth. It was one of the most valuable commodities of the times. One writer notes that this was the dye that gave rise to the term "royal purple," suggesting her clientele would have been royalty and the very rich.

Lydia was clearly a woman of substance. We learn that her home was large enough to accommodate Paul and his associates.

She was from Thyatira, a city in Asia Minor, where the missionaries had of late been forbidden to speak. Now here she was in Europe receiving the gospel that up to then was not being preached back home.

Lydia was a proselyte; she had forsaken idolatry and joined the Jewish religion as a sincere worshipper of God. God opened her heart and she listened attentively to the truths that Paul and the missionaries spoke. She believed them and was saved by faith. God had turned and prepared her heart to accept the truth.

The ultimate test for all those who are the true worshippers of God is; what will you do with Jesus? All true worshippers and God fearers of all stripes will accept Jesus as their Messiah, when the gospel is presented to them.

Whose heart the Lord opened....one commentator writes:

As she was a sincere worshipper of God, she was prepared to receive the heavenly truths spoken by Paul and his companions; and, as she was *faithful* to the grace she had received, so God gave her more grace, and gave her now a Divine conviction that what was spoken by Paul was true; and therefore, *she attended unto the things*-she believed them and received them as the doctrines of God....

.... she attended... meaning she gave sustained attention; she kept on listening to each word; she was on the edge of her seat and hung on to the words of each of the speakers. Hers' was a heart awakened to the truths of God.

When we are evangelizing, we must remember that even though most non-Christians might give us a cool reception, there often is one or two whose heart God has prepared. Don't let the reaction of the crowd stop us, for there are some that are listening.

Lydia would recognize that the Apostles were bringing information, which would fulfill all her Jewish hopes. She did not get upset at the Christian message.

God had cracked the wall, and the Gospel message had reached Europe. The church would find great leaders in Europe who would spread the message of Christ, but it would also find great heretics which would corrupt the Gospel. But in every case where the Gospel spread, the Spirit was there to make sure that the "good soil" was well cultivated.

Let us not underestimate the bold step that this woman Lydia took. She had no great encouragement from a large group of supporters; but she realized that Jesus was the Messiah and made a personal decision to lay hold on Him.

Verse 15. *And when...*baptism is presented here as something that should naturally follow salvation or confession of faith in Christ. She was baptized without delay, along with her household, which would have included her servants and friends.



Clearly, Lydia's belief in the true God was also a wonderful blessing on the lives of her household. They too were present for worship, accepted Christ and were also baptized. Christians must spare no quarter, particularly in living an exemplary lifestyle, as we speak and live the truths of God before those over whom we exercise a measure of control. Her hospitality immediately came up front as she invited the missionaries to stay at her house. Paul was not in the habit of taking support from his converts and they must have declined the invitation at first.

Paul and his group also had to be careful about the social niceties. He would not have wanted to damage Lydia's reputation, something that could easily occur in that kind of society. In addition, evangelism was a dangerous task. This was amply demonstrated in the following verses where Paul and Silas were soon beaten and thrown into prison, without due process of law.

Lydia however was very determined and persuasive. She was prepared to risk a lot to prove that she was now a faithful and trustworthy follower of "the Way", a name given to early Christianity.

She argued that if her acceptance of Christ was proof that she had been faithful to the truths she had previously received and would likely be as faithful to the new truths, then she would not bring discredit to their work and so it was fitting that they come and stay at her home. Her persuasion overcame their reluctance, for Paul and the missionaries accepted her invitation and her home became the base for missions in Philippi. Philippians 4:15-18 and Acts 16:15, 40 further tell us that her home provided long-term support for Paul.

Hospitality is an important plank in the spread of the Gospel and support must be forthcoming for those who work for God. Believers must do all they can to assist the spread of the Gospel. Note however that they must be discerning and support only the workers of the true God. We cannot underestimate the strength of this woman. She put herself at serious risk when she became a Christian, even more for her home to be the base of operation for the missionaries. Remember that the enemy was not asleep.

Note, a great work had begun among a group that would hardly have been expected to do much. But it was the few women believers that were faithful and gathered by themselves to worship God. Paul and the missionaries did not look down on this humble group but gave them as much attention as was necessary. The Holy Spirit regarded the women and opened their hearts. It was from this small, seemingly unimportant and lowly group that a powerful Philippian ministry emerged.

So as one of the elect of God she showed her new nature, loving God and loving God's people. But note carefully that she illustrates one writer says, **the fact you may be very near and yet far from God. Religious, zealous, attended religious meetings, probably a prayer warrior—it was a prayer enclosure—wealthy, influential and cultured, intelligent.... and yet unsaved”.**

The lesson for us is that we must not equate our privilege, our success, and our position with special divine favour. Recognize your privilege to come to Christ but you must act for the benefit of others by showing your love for them. She submitted to baptism to show that her heart had been awakened by God and that she accepted what the Apostle taught. So, this was an illustration of the God inspired reaction to the Good News by the Good soil.

But while the missionary party was in Philippi they were going to the place of prayer and a girl inhabited by a demonic spirit that allowed her to do fortune-telling accosted them. Paul



performed an exorcism and drove the demon out of the girl and because of that they were taken before the magistrates for disturbing the peace, beaten, and put in prison. The prison was opened supernaturally, and the jailer and his family came to believe and were baptized, tending to the wounds of Paul and Silas and opening their house to Paul and Silas. And the message of Jesus Christ spread into prison and outside.

Verse 40. The magistrates had sent a message to Paul and Silas that they were free to go in peace and they went from the prison to the house of Lydia. According to Luke 10: 5- 7 it seemed that the participant several weeks at Lydia's house. Now they returned later, and they encouraged the brethren and then left the city. Note that Paul could have made a lot of trouble for the magistrates for he was a Roman citizen, and that kind of punishment could not be given to Roman citizens by this magistrate.

1 Corinthians 1:26-28

The problem is that the ways of men in our society is very different from the ways of God and so people do not like to think that salvation is a gift of God and that we are justified through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle stated over and over again that God is the source of our being and our blessing. There is no place of pride or self-esteem apart from God for we live only in Him and only for Him. What we have is a gift from God. It comes from God for He is the source of OUR gift of salvation and everything else. Those of us who are believers are “called” of God just as God called Abram, Moses and others for particular missions and God called Paul for a mission and appointed him as an Apostle.

We are reminded by the Apostle that God does not choose the mighty, the well-born and the powerful and that God does not call you to bring you up to that level. God calls you and when He called some of them it was to bring everyone to the same level for all are in need of mercy and grace.

One writer tells us why God does this?

“Why? Paul tells us. He has chosen the foolish things to put to shame the wise. These chosen the weak things to put to shame the things that are mighty. He’s chosen the base things, the things which are despised, the things that are to bring to nothing the things that are. He is trying to show, all of them, great in the eyes of men, small in the eyes of men, foolish in the eyes of men, that we all are sinners and in need of divine grace. We all stand on that level of need before the Lord God. The apostle Paul wrote, “*you stand by faith. The not high-minded, but fear*”. And that of course is what he's talking about.

Incidentally, you can tell from this that there is no merit in the election of the elect. What are they? Foolish? Weak? Base? Nobodies? No merit. We don't get to heaven on our merit. We are not in the elect company because we have something that God recognizes. So, the faith that we have we know is a gift from God”.

We know that the Corinthians and Philippians and the early church had people in there that were anything but holy. They had all kind of thieves, covetous people, drunkards, homosexuals, sexually immoral, revilers, and other people accustomed to doing ‘bad’ sins. But funny God called them sanctified because that was their position and that is our position.



We therefore have righteousness and sanctification received by faith. We are sanctified, made holy people, sanctified by God's word. That is so because in Christ we are made holy, that is, declared holy despite what we might appear to be.

So, there is no room for boasting. We cannot glory in anything but in the Lord. We are grounded in Him, in His power and because of His relationship with us and so we can walk in confidence because we are walking not in our own abilities but in His ability.

We are reminded that redemption is the first and last GIFT and so we will meet our Lord in the air at the appropriate time.

CONCLUSION

Lydia was certainly faithful to the 'light' she had received and demonstrated it in the godly influence she exercised over her household. The Text does not tell us whether or not she was married but she did what was right in her circumstances.

Knowledge of the true God and belief in the Lord Jesus should be urgently shared, particularly with those most dear to us.

The missionaries' route to Lydia was long and took an unexpected turn but in all this the missionaries stayed the course, as they continually followed the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Those in the Master's service can be assured that as he closes one door, he opens another, and they must understand that God is already at work preparing the hearts of those who will respond to the gospel.

God speaks through His Holy Spirit, the Bible, our prayers, circumstances and the members of His church, to reveal Himself and His purposes and His ways.

When engaged in the work, believers should not agonize over knowing God's will or fear we might have missed it. A sovereign God will be sure to make his will be known and ensure it is not missed.

When the missionaries were convinced of God's will, they acted immediately. Let this be our response to the revelation of God's will in our outreach efforts and all areas of our spiritual lives.

An unmistakable message from our Text, which is also consistent with the message of Acts, is that our Lord is in control, bringing to pass those things He commanded and promised. This should be both a warning and a comfort for believers.

