

INTRO: Turkey and Greece today; Roman control then. Of all that I just read, most memorable for me are the words, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." I hear it as an invitation to further spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## I. SPREADING THE GOSPEL... BY GOD'S DIRECTION

A. Paul was **called** to a new life in/by Christ

1. formerly a persecutor of Jesus' church
2. dramatic call to faith on the Damascus road
3. Ananias pronounced him forgiven (as with us; two parts...)
4. great joy the rest of his life (Hey, mine, too!)

B. Paul was sometimes given further visions or revelations

1. Holy Spirit told Antioch **congregation** to send him as missionary
2. other such visions from God, as this one, guided Paul's travels
3. where to go, but more often **what** to teach; many revelations

C. Sometimes directed by **closed** doors

1. beaten, stoned, thrown out of some towns
2. v.6 – verbally forbidden by Holy Spirit to go to Asia
3. v.7 – Paul wanted Bithyia, but Spirit did not let him
4. Biblical principle, in missions, but also in general (cp. Verndale)

D. or **opening** doors

1. v.12 – 'a colony'; i.e., Roman citizens, as was Paul
2. willingness of acquaintance to listen to fellow-citizen
3. or even to ask an outright question (winter Texans: where ya from)
4. we may go from talk of buildings, to what is taught there

## II... AS GOD OPENS HEARTS...

A. He opened Lydia's heart (v.14)

1. "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength.."
2. cute expression: 'opened her heart' (not open-heart surgery)
3. God moved Lydia to heed words spoken by Paul
4. Holy Spirit worked (and still works) through **words**

B. So, **what** was spoken by Paul?

1. not much given of Paul's teachings in book of Acts

(continued)

2. Rom. 2Cor. Gal. Eph. Phil. Col. 2Thess. 2Tim. Titus Philemon (12)
3. all of us sinful; stings us by naming sins, cong. and individual
4. e.g. ignorance of Word; failures to speak out as we ought
5. we know life and death of Christ, salvation by grace through faith
6. yes, mere words, but such words with Holy Spirit behind them

C. Yeah, that was then, but now is now (so goes the complaint)

1. has the Holy Spirit changed?
2. has God's message changed?
3. has man's basic nature changed?
4. does God still open hearths, as Lydia, among us today? Yours?

### III... MOVING MANY TO RESPOND

A. By **being** baptized (v.15)

1. almost all then were adults; as I've done; by river; another 90+
2. and also her household was baptized
3. who were they? How'd they hear? How old were they?

B. Begged 'us' (v.15) as Karen begs y'all to stay with us)

1. note v.8 'they' and v.10 'we' = Luke's from Troas/Troy
2. begged on basis of her faith (If you have judged me... faithful...)
3. response of faith **after** baptism, not before
4. if one loves Christ, he loves his fellow-confessors in Christ
5. Lydia meets the earthly needs of the apostles (as do you)
6. also an example for many (locals; also via Paul's letters; us today)

C. Even as it happens among us today

1. congregations provide salary, housing, health insurance
2. also for those in seminaries in USA, or even in Africa
3. God works on hearts; if not, don't expect much
4. it's called 'fruits of faith'

CONCLUSION: God's Holy Spirit is still at work spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation through the message of what Christ has done for us. He has lived the holy life that we have not; and He has suffered and died bearing the sins of us all. All who believe it are declared forgiven by God. His Holy Spirit opens hearts that then respond with faith, and with so much more. Amen.