



ACTS 16: 6-15

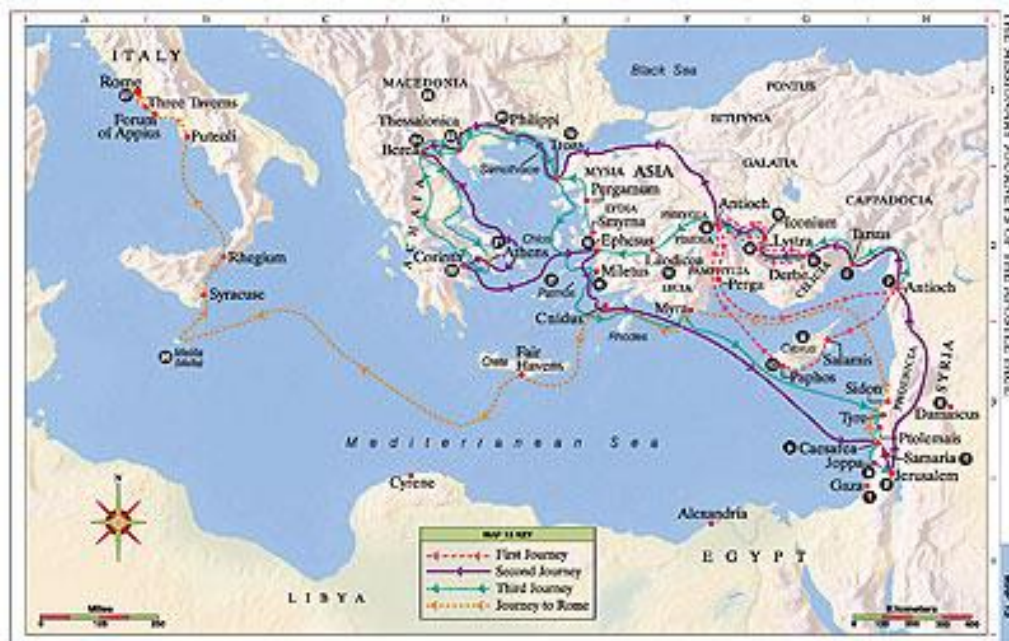
Whose Plan Is This Anyway?

A Call from Macedonia

⁶ Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia¹ at that time. ⁷ Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia,^[a] but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there. ⁸ So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas.

Have you ever felt led to do something only to have that door closed right in front of you? How did you feel? What did that closed door lead to?

⁹ That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" ¹⁰ So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.



¹ This is Asia Minor, not East Asia (China). Asia Minor is now the nation of Turkey.

Paul had a vision cast before him and that vision became the vision of his team. How important is it to follow the vision of leadership in our church?

What does it say about Paul that he would set aside his own will and give way to the will of God in choosing where he would go and preach?

Have you ever been so convicted of something that you knew it was God's leading only to realize it perhaps wasn't at all? Did that let-down lead to something better-something bigger?

Pastor Rob: "We are free to experience life in a deeper, more abundant way when we surrender our will, our plans to His. Many times, good people, even followers of God come to Him with plans they want Him to bless. Though it's good that we would want to "help God out" by bringing Him things to bless, even things we believe will please Him, often the results aren't pretty. Think of a 4-year old trying to impress mommy by picking out her own clothes, putting on her own make-up and cutting her own hair. The gesture is sweet, but the results, not so much. In this text we see a seasoned, experienced, mature Paul heading out on what he believed to be a plan God would bless and be pleased with. But thankfully, because Paul's surrender and sensitivity to the Spirit's leading was deep enough, he was able to follow God's plan instead. As a result Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy were not only able to be a blessing to Lydia and her fellow "Ladies Prayer Group" but the door to all of Europe was opened ahead of them, and the Gospel of the Kingdom."

Lydia of Philippi Believes in Jesus

¹¹ We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. ¹² From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days. ¹³ On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. ¹⁵ She was baptized along with other members of her household, and she asked us to be her guests. "If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my home." And she urged us until we agreed.

Paul preached and Lydia listened to the message; the Lord opened her heart so that she would accept the message and then was baptized. Isn't that the model of the church today? Each of us as believers as part of Great Commission is called to bring The Good News to community but it is God alone that must open a heart to receive it. To experience a person accepting Jesus is like witnessing a new birth.

