

# DEEPER

## Acts- “The Great Adventure” Season 5 Part 1

### WEEK 3- Acts 16:6-15

**DEEPER-LIVE WELL POINT---** 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 its 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 4 year old trying to impress mommy by picking out their own clothes, putting on their own make-up and cutting their 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 Western Europe was opened ahead of them, and the Gospel of the Kingdom.

- Oftentimes things done in the name of God...for God...have NOTHING to do with God. Think “the inquisition”, treatment of native Americans by many Christian settlers/missionaries, church’s far too frequent/broad historical bent towards racism etc etc. Clearly, these were not the will or plan of God in spite of the leaders claiming His commissioning/blessing.

- But still other times there are many other things done in the name of God, for God, that still have NOTHING to do with God. For instance, history proves that many new, exciting missions/church-plants and new ministries within existing churches...though good, though in and of themselves God-honoring, were NOT in fact God’s will. The problem with these endeavors is that in spite of the good they may do for a season, they risk disillusioning those who may have “gotten out of the boat” and thought they were gonna walk on water to Jesus only to be left wondering why He let them drown? I mean...you have a family that sells all, inspires other families to sell or sacrifice significant parts of their lives to re-orient around this new cause for Christ only to have it flop???? “How could God let this happen?---we were only trying to please Him?” is a question that is often asked on the back side of such endeavors. And yet, the reality is that God may have never been a part of the plan. The plan may have been a good plan by good people that even followed biblical principles but in the end, it was a plan birthed by the flesh vs. revealed to them of God through the Spirit.

<sup>6</sup> 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 Asia at that time. <sup>7</sup> Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but again **the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there**. <sup>8</sup> So instead, **they** went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas.

<sup>9</sup> 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!” <sup>10</sup> So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.

<sup>11</sup> **We** boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. <sup>12</sup> From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days.

<sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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.

-That’s what could have happened here, right? I mean...Paul was a deep student of God’s Word and now a veteran church planting missionary with an impressive tenure. Whatever his reasons were for

heading east into Asia Minor or then again north into northern Europe...they were certainly based on a pragmatic rationale that would have come from his past experience and ongoing research and reflection. And yet Paul demonstrated a DEEPER level of intimacy and sensitivity to God's plans than most. He was willing not once, but twice to back off his ego, shrug off what others on his team might think of his leadership ability with another change of plans, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> time was able to not only hear His voice but responded immediately!

**DIVE DEEPER**--- As always...we thank David Guzik and enduringword.com for this incredible, free commentary!

2. (6-10) God directs Paul to the region of Macedonia.

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. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 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." 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.

a. **They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia:** After strengthening the churches in the region, Paul seeks to go next to the immediate west, towards the important city of Ephesus. But Paul was **forbidden by the Holy Spirit** to go there.

i. How could the Holy Spirit possibly forbid the preaching of the word in Asia? Because there was a work being orchestrated by the Spirit of God, and Paul wasn't the right person in the right place at the right time to begin bringing the gospel to the Roman Province of Asia Minor. There was certainly nothing wrong with Paul's *desire* to **preach the word in Asia**; but it wasn't God's timing, so it was **forbidden by the Holy Spirit**.

ii. How exactly did the Holy Spirit forbid them? It is difficult to say exactly how the Holy Spirit said *no*; it may have been through a word of prophecy, or by an inward speaking of the Holy Spirit, or by circumstances. One way or another, Paul and his company got the message.

iii. **Asia** does not refer to the Far East as we know it today. It refers to the Roman Province of Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey.

b. **They tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them:** After the attempt to go to Asia, Paul sought to go north into **Bithynia**, but is again prevented by the Holy Spirit. So, **they came down to Troas**.

i. Paul didn't set out to go to **Troas**. It was at least the third choice for him. But it was the Holy Spirit's plan to lead him there. Paul, beautifully

responsive to the Holy Spirit, is willing to lay down his will and plans for the direction that the Holy Spirit brings.

ii. Paul is being guided by hindrance. The Holy Spirit often guides as much by the *closing* of doors as He does by the *opening* of doors.

c. **And a vision appeared to Paul in the night:** In Troas, God makes Paul's direction clear. In **a vision**, Paul is "invited" to the region of Macedonia, westward across the Aegean Sea.

i. This moves Paul and his missionary team from the continent of Asia to the continent of Europe; this was the first missionary endeavor to Europe.

ii. The wisdom and greatness of God's plan is beginning to unfold. In Paul's mind, he wanted to reach a few cities in his region. But God wanted to give Paul a continent to win for Jesus Christ.

d. **A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."** The Macedonian man wanted **help**. So Paul went to bring Macedonia the gospel!

i. The greatest help we can bring anyone is the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ! It is good for us to bring other help along with the gospel, but without the gospel, what real help have you given them?

e. **Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go:** Paul did not hesitate to answer the call of the Macedonian man. Paul's missionary team did not hesitate to follow him on the basis of this call. This was a strong, godly man, leading a strong, godly team!

i. God still calls people to the mission field. Perhaps many today will encounter a "Macedonia man" who will call them out to the mission field. Would to God that those who hear a "Macedonian man" today will respond the way Paul and his team responded!

f. **Immediately we sought to go:** The shift from *they* (*they came down to Troas*, Acts 16:8) to **we** in this verse probably means that Luke joined the band of missionaries in Troas. Perhaps he even came as Paul's personal doctor.

i. Now we see another reason why **they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia**. We see another reason why **the Spirit did not permit them** to go into Bithynia. God wanted Paul and his team to go to Troas and pick up a doctor named Luke. If God wouldn't have said "no" to Paul these two times, we would not have a gospel and a Book of Acts written by Luke!

ii. At the time, Paul probably had no idea of the greatness of God's purpose. God wanted to give him a continent for Jesus, to give him a

personal doctor, and to give all of us the man whom God would use to write more of the New Testament than anyone else did. God knows what He is doing when he says, “No.”

## B. Paul’s work in the Macedonian city of Philippi.

### 1. (11-15) The conversion of Lydia.

Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next *day* came to Neapolis, 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. 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*. 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. 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.

a. **Sailing from Troas:** Paul and his missionary team (now including Luke) had to sail across the Aegean Sea, from the continent of Asia to the continent of Europe. This was a big step, perhaps bigger than Paul even knew!

b. **From there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia:** Paul’s general strategy was to plant churches in the major cities. He knew that it was easier for the gospel to spread *from* these cities than *to* these cities.

c. **On the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made:** The fact that the Jews had no synagogue and met by the river means that there were not many Jewish men in Philippi.

i. “Had there been ten Jewish men, they would have sufficed to constitute a synagogue. No number of women would compensate for the absence of even one man necessary to make up the quorum of ten.” (Bruce)

d. **Lydia . . . was a seller of purple:** Anyone who **was a seller of purple** dealt in a valued, luxurious product. The dyes used for making purple were expensive and highly regarded.

i. **From the city of Thyatira:** **Thyatira** was well known as a center for this purple dye and fabric made from it. Later, there was a church in Thyatira also, and it was one of the seven churches addressed in Revelation (Revelation 2:18-29).

e. **The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul:** Before Lydia was converted (as demonstrated by her baptism), **the Lord opened her heart.** This is a work God must do in all who believe, because as Jesus said, *no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him* (John 6:44).

i. Therefore, the most important element in evangelism is imploring God through prayer to *open hearts*, for without this there can be no genuine conversion.

f. **She begged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.”** Immediately, Lydia set about doing good. Her hospitality is touching and wonderful example.