

CALLED TO SERVE

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 33:1-12

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 16:11-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: Acts 16:11-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30

I. Entry to Europe

Acts 16:11-15, 40

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

.....
40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

11. *Troas* was a major seaport on the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea. There

Paul, Silas, and others were joined by Luke. These missionaries boarded a ship for Macedonia, going by way of the small island-city of *Samothracia* to the western Aegean port city *Neapolis*.

12. *Neapolis* served as a seaport to the important city of *Philippi*. *Philippi* appeared to be a good city for the missionaries' task, for they decided to stay *certain days*.

13. Paul's usual strategy was to visit the city's synagogue *on the sabbath* to teach fellow Jews about Jesus. Tradition required that a community have 10 married Jewish men to have a synagogue, but that number seems to have been unavailable in this overwhelmingly Gentile city.

Instead, a group met outside the city gates *by a river side*. A place *where prayer was wont to be made* is a way of describing any synagogue.

This prayer group seems to have consisted solely of *women*. In addition to that demographic, Paul would have encountered them in terms of one of three religious persuasions: as Jews, as proselytes (converts to Judaism), or as God-fearing Gentiles who had not converted to Judaism. The third category is most likely, given the nature of the city of *Philippi*.

14. The *certain woman named Lydia* was named after the area within which

her town of *Thyatira* was located—an area from which Paul had just come, after having received a vision in which a “man of Macedonia” had invited him to come over (Acts 16:9)!

In Paul’s day, Thyatira was the chief source of dyed fabric. The woman Lydia specialized in *purple* fabric. To sell purple cloth was to deal in luxury items, so it is likely that Lydia had prosperous business connections in her hometown.

Like the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10), Lydia *worshipped God* and may have been drawn to the Jewish faith without converting to it. Many barriers existed against full inclusion with the Jewish people. But Luke regularly recognized the faithfulness of those people who, like Lydia, worshipped and feared God (13:16, 26) or were otherwise “devout” (10:2).

Surely Lydia’s prior worship of God had prepared her heart to hear Paul’s message. The Lord, not Paul or his rhetoric, then opened her heart to Paul’s presentation of the gospel. God had gone before His missionary, and God will continue after His missionary finishes.

15. Lydia responded to Paul’s message with faith. We can imagine that Lydia *and her household* were baptized right there at the river without delay.

As an outflowing of gratitude to God for accepting her into His family, Lydia invited Paul and his companions to her *house* to stay for a while. Asking the men to judge whether she was *faithful to the Lord* reveals that this was also a test. Would the Jewish men visit the home of a Gentile woman? By insisting that the missionaries join her, Lydia revealed her own conviction that she and all her household were now entirely acceptable to the Lord.

40. While in Philippi, Paul and Silas were arrested for casting a spirit of divi-

nation out of a fortune-telling slave girl (Acts 16:16-24). Following the conversion of their guard and release from *prison* (16:25-39), Paul and Silas returned to *the house of Lydia*. The unjust treatment of the missionaries was traumatic for them and the new congregation. This became a time for all to be *comforted*.

Lydia’s legacy of hospitality, service, and faithfulness endured in this church, however, as Paul celebrated the partnership those of the church had maintained “from the first day until now” (Philippians 1:5).

II. Correction to Corinth 1 Corinthians 1:26-30

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

26. Paul had planted the church in Corinth in about AD 52. Now, in about AD 56, he writes a letter to that church while ministering in Ephesus. The letter is in response to troubling reports of factions and disunity (1 Corinthians 1:11).

Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians of what they had been before coming to Christ. Their church did not begin

with leaders who had great educations, widespread social influence, or distinguished families.

Regarding being *wise . . . after the flesh*, Paul was well acquainted with the dangers there. He himself was able to quote Greek philosophers and scholars (see 1 Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12; Acts 17:24-29) while recognizing the overall defects in philosophies not grounded in Scripture (1 Corinthians 1:20; 2:1-5).

27. Paul sees the great irony in all of this. All human wisdom and power are finite things and miniscule when compared to the power and wisdom of God.

But God does not often choose to dazzle people into belief by displays of might and intelligence. God prefers to use *the foolish* and *the weak things of the world* to communicate His loving concern and His plan for humankind. In so doing, God is able to confound the world's expectations. In 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul referred to the crucifixion of Christ as a "stumbling block." Christ's atoning death on the cross was scandalous, not what the Jews expected from their Messiah.

28. The word translated *base* is the antonym of the word for "noble" in 1 Corinthians 1:26—literally, "ignoble." In the Roman world, there was nothing more ignoble than a cross, the torture-execution for the worst criminals. It was especially problematic to Jews because of the curse of hanging on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:23).

Christians today see the cross as a comforting and victorious symbol. Churches display it. Not so in Paul's day. The cross was shameful; nothing could be more despised among polite society. A Christian seeing a cross in the first century would be struck by the completely unexpected and humbling circumstances of Jesus' sacrifice.

29. God's plan ensures that no one can claim credit for their own salvation. *No flesh* would think of the plan God enacted as the solution to human sinfulness. The paradoxical nature of the gospel does not allow for anyone to receive self-created *glory* in God's *presence*.

Paul's example is instructive. His miracles did not speak to his own power, but to God's (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). And his preaching of the gospel was persuasive not because of his own eloquence. The Corinthians prided themselves as discerning, intelligent people—they could be impressed by a well-reasoned speech of no substance. But Paul had instead presented a message of the utmost importance. The truth of the gospel, not human skill, had convinced the Corinthian Christians.

30. God's *wisdom*, unlike the world's, finds fulfillment in *Christ Jesus*. *Righteousness* invokes a legal term that means even though we are guilty of our sins, "no penalty" is the sentence.

The Holy Spirit works *sanctification* in us, teaching us to identify sin and empowering us to overcome it and produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:13-26). This allows us to live holy lives that would be impossible without God's power (Romans 8:1-16).

Redemption is a term associated with being freed from slavery. In the Roman Empire, a slave could purchase his or her own freedom. But sinners have no way to pay for our own freedom. We have not only been bought by the blood of Jesus—we have been set free from our slavery to sin (Romans 6:17).

Put together, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption describe the reality of being in Christ. Through the cross God has made a way for us to be restored to fellowship with Him. This is our salvation in Jesus Christ.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

CALLED TO SERVE

Into the Lesson

Estimate how many total hours it took to edit and fit the copy of today's lesson. Make your estimate for the teacher guide only. Don't include time for proofreading, contract management, visuals, etc.

What is your basis for that estimate?

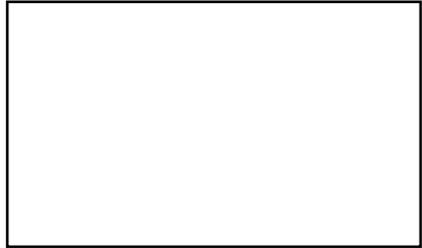
If possible, work with others to prepare a more precise estimate.

Was it better to work as a team or individually? Today's lesson highlights the importance of partnerships in teamwork.

Into the Word

Read Acts 16:11-15, 40. Compare and contrast the roles of Paul and Lydia in planting the church in Philippi.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-30. In light of this passage, sketch a before and after picture of you, depicting who you were before Jesus and how your relationship with Jesus has changed you.



Into Life

Brainstorm all the types of gatherings that happen at the church building, and all types of gatherings that could occur in homes. Based on that information, fill out the following chart.

	Inreach Events	Upreach Events	Outreach Events
Better in Homes			
Better at the Church Building			
OK at Either			

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Seek the wisdom of the cross.
Serve in its shadow.