

The Holy Spirit – 5 – Acts chapter 16, verses 1 – 20:-

This chapter records the way the Holy Spirit directed Paul and Silas, joined at Lystra by Timothy, on their missionary journey.

Verses 1 – 5:- A question here as to how far we personally should ‘fit in’ to local culture. To avoid criticism Timothy was circumcised to fit in with Jewish religious custom. The Epistles to Timothy show that he became a key player in the early days of church growth.
Read 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 19 – 23 for a statement of Paul’s method of working. Note that it was “*all for the sake of the Gospel*”.

Verses 6 – 7:- These verses show how the Holy Spirit can and does say ‘No, not that way!’. It was preparing the mission for a new field of work.

Verses 9 – 12:- The call from Macedonia shows how obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit is rewarded. Paul and his ‘missionary team’ would have wondered just where they were meant to go next when a vision pointed the way! Negative messages from the Holy Spirit are just as important as positive ones! Maybe more so as they get us into the right place, in the right frame of mind, at the right time!

Verses 13 – 15:- The city of Philippi does not appear to have had a Jewish synagogue at this time. The “*place of prayer*” appears to have been a designated and ordered area. There was seating (verse 13) and it may have been along the lines of an open air meeting place.

Lydia was a Gentile follower of the Jewish religion (as were the Ethiopian and Cornelius). Notice that “*the Lord opened her heart*” to hear and understand the Gospel. This is probably the key phrase to our understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit!

Remember that in those early days after Pentecost “*the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved*”. (Acts chapter 2, verse 47).

Verses 16 – 20:- Philippi was an important Roman city and there would be many different cultures and different forms of idolatry. Soothsaying and divination would be common and with Paul proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord there would inevitably be a spiritual battle. Paul and Silas were arrested. However the reason given was that their preaching and teaching was “*disturbing our city*”. (See verse 20)
[More next week]

In all this, the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit is paramount in the ‘where and how’ the Gospel is preached and shared. With the ever increasing need for straightforward Gospel preaching here in our own country, as we move from ‘maintenance to mission’, we need to be aware of the prompting and leading of the Holy Spirit. The Lord alone can open hearts and minds to receive the Good News of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our constant prayer should be for guidance in our ministry and work as we seek to glorify his name.

*God is working his purpose out
As year succeeds to year:
God is working his purpose out,
And the time is drawing near:
Nearer and nearer draws the time,
The time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled
With the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.*

*All we can do is nothing worth
Unless God blesses the deed;
Vainly we hope for the harvest tide
When God gives life to the seed.
Yet nearer and nearer draws the time’
The time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled
With the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.*

Arthur Campbell Ainger 1894