

## THE MACEDONIAN APPEAL

– *JUNE 4. – ACTS 16:6-15. –*

ST. PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY TOUR – MARKED EVIDENCE OF DIVINE SUPERVISION OF ALL THE INTERESTS OF GOD'S CHURCH – GOSPEL SENT TO EUROPE – PREACHING IN PHILIPPI – LYDIA OF THYATIRA AND HER HOUSEHOLD BELIEVED.

**"Come over into Macedonia and help us." – Verse 9.**

FOR some time after the Conference at Jerusalem, St. Paul and Barnabas remained at Antioch. But seeing that there were many laborers there and that a larger field was little worked, they planned a second missionary tour. Barnabas and his nephew John Mark went in one direction, while St. Paul went in another with Silas, with whom he had become acquainted at the Jerusalem Conference, and who is reported to have been a Roman citizen, as was St. Paul. It is with these two that we have to do in today's Study.

Their course lay through Syria and Cilicia to the cities of Derbe and Lystra. In these places they confirmed the faith of such as had already been accepted of the Lord through the Apostle's first missionary tour and through the working of the Truth during the interim. It was at Lystra that they found Timothy, a young man of Jewish mother and well trained in the Word by her and his grandmother – his father being a Greek. – 2 Tim. 1:3-5.

We note that amongst the things presented to the Churches was the decision of the Jerusalem Conference that the Jewish Law should not be considered binding upon the Gentiles, except in certain features noted in our last Study. To some it has seemed inconsistent that at the same time when the Apostle was calling this decision to the attention of the brethren he should cause Timothy to be

circumcised. But when properly understood, St. Paul's conduct was thoroughly consistent. Circumcision was no part of the Mosaic Law, but was instituted with Abraham, centuries previous, as a mark or sign upon all the children of Abraham. (Genesis 17:9-14.) The Council at Jerusalem did not decide that no Jew should be circumcised thenceforth, but that circumcision should not be considered necessary to a Christian.

The thought is that the fact that one is a child of Abraham according to the flesh is not sufficient to make him a New Creature in Christ; and therefore circumcision of the flesh will not accomplish this. Since the New Creature is received of God as a member of the Body of Christ, he must as a New Creature have the circumcision of the heart in order to be a Spiritual Israelite, whether previously he was a Jew or a Gentile. Circumcision of the heart signifies a cutting off – a separation from the flesh, its aims, hopes, desires, etc.

We see, then, that there could be no objection to the circumcision of Timothy – that it would neither help nor hinder him spiritually – if done with the clear understanding that it was only a figure, and not the real circumcision which constituted Timothy a member of the Body of Christ, the Church. Timothy's mother being a Jew, he was a Jew, even though his father had been a Greek. And this fact becoming known to Jews in general with whom they would come into contact while traveling, inquiry might be made as to whether Timothy had been circumcised. If he had not been, the implication would be that he had been a renegade Jew. If he had been circumcised, this would grant him correspondingly greater influence with them – a closer access to their hearts.

## **THE GOSPEL SENT TO EUROPE**

After good success in the mission up to the point where today's Study begins, the Apostle had in mind a journey through Asia Minor. But apparently things went unfavorably until he concluded that the Lord was hindering their efforts; and in perplexity he began to think

of other fields of labor. His moment of uncertainty was the Lord's opportunity for directing him. He dreamed that he saw a man dressed in the costume of the Macedonians, who beckoned to him and said, "Come over and help us."

The Apostle accepted this dream as of Divine leading, and promptly began the journey which took him into Europe. We have here an evidence of God's supervision of all the interests of His Church. He was not averse to permitting the Message to go into Asia Minor; for it went there later, possibly at a more opportune time. But this was the time for sending the Gospel to Europe. Evidently the Lord could have directed His Message southward through Africa and away from Europe; but there is a "due time" connected with every feature of the Divine Plan. And now, by Divine arrangement, the Message of God's grace in Christ was to go to the Greeks, who were recognized at this time as the foremost people of the world in literature and the arts.

It is supposed that about this time Luke, the physician, became attached to St. Paul's company. A man of education, a scribe as well as a physician, the Lord evidently provided him as St. Paul's amanuensis, that thereby the Apostle's letters should reach many of the churches of that time, as well as the Lord's people from then until now. Thus it came that Luke wrote not only a version of the Gospel, but also the Book of Acts and nearly all of St. Paul's Epistles.

Here we have another illustration of the privileges of the various members of the Body of Christ. Luke could not be the Apostle Paul, nor could he do St. Paul's work. But he could be used of the Lord honorably and efficiently in a greater spread of the Truth. So it is with us. We cannot be Apostles. We cannot do anything **[R5903 : page 152]** very great. But if we are filled with the Spirit of the Lord, it is our privilege to be used to some extent in some service of the Truth. And any service for the Lord and for the brethren, even to the washing of feet or to any menial service, is an honorable privilege.

## **PHILIPPI HONORED WITH THE GOSPEL**

The first place in Europe for the preaching of the Good Tidings appears to have been Philippi, one of the chief cities of Macedonia. On the Sabbath day, as usual, the Apostle and his companions sought for some who worshiped God, and who hoped for the Kingdom that God had promised. They knew that such would be the better prepared to receive the Message which the Apostle had to deliver – that Jesus had appeared as the Redeemer and had laid the foundation for the Millennial Kingdom in the sacrifice of Himself; and that ultimately the blessings of His sacrifice would be made available to every creature; but that now, in advance of the Divine dealing with the world in general, the Lord is calling out a Spiritual Israel, a "little flock," to be His kings and priests with Jesus in the administration of the Millennial blessings.

Apparently there was no synagogue in Philippi; and matters may have looked very unfavorable to St. Paul and his companions. However, they heard of a little religious meeting held every Sabbath by the riverside, outside of the city gate. It was principally a prayer meeting and a place of Divine fellowship. Not having the facilities of a synagogue, they probably had no Scripture parchments, and hence no reading of the Law, but merely prayer and worship.

All this was favorable to the Gospel Message which the Apostle had to present. He spoke to those who resorted thither, commending the importance of their worshipful condition of heart and of praise to the Giver of all good. Then he proceeded to declare the Good Tidings of the Sacrifice of Jesus, of His death and resurrection, and of His Second Coming in power and great glory. He showed surely that the invitation now being given was for joint-sacrificers with Jesus, and that their reward would be joint-heirship with their Lord in His Millennial Kingdom, as members of His Body, the Church. – Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:11,12; Galatians 3:29.

However many or few were at the meeting, there was one present whose heart was in the right condition to receive the Message. This one was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple. She was from Thyatira, from the very district – Asia Minor – into which the Apostle had not been permitted to enter and preach. Probably she was in Philippi temporarily, engaged in merchandising – perhaps of purple dyes or possibly of purple-dyed cloth. Dyes were much more expensive in olden times than now, and the secret of how to make them was turned to financial profit. Thus it is supposed that Lydia was in quite comfortable circumstances financially. Not only did the Truth open her heart, enlightening the eyes of her understanding, but she was prompt to obey it in full consecration and to symbolize that consecration in water baptism – "she and her household."

Not always do religious parents have religiously inclined children. Several instances of the kind are mentioned in the Scriptures. Personal experience teaches us also that the parent who is earnestly consecrated to the Lord and guided by His Word has generally a good influence upon those nearest to him and directly under his care. Such an influence should be hoped for, prayed for, sought for, by every parent. But it can be obtained only by carefulness, circumspection of word and of deed. These in subjection imply that the very thoughts of the heart have been brought into captivity to the will of God.

Nevertheless, parents who have failed to discern the Truth and to recognize its responsibilities until their children have outgrown parental instruction must not chide themselves unmercifully if their children do not respect them and their religious convictions. Rather they should remember that the Lord is thoroughly acquainted with the situation, and will hold them accountable only for what they do or fail to do after they have come to know Him and to have an opportunity for understanding the instructions of His Word

respecting their own lives and the training of their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. – Ephesians 6:4.

### **"AND SHE CONSTRAINED US"**

The fact that Lydia's household believed implies that she was the mother of adult children; and that these were so thoroughly under her influence that they worshiped with her the true God, neglecting the idolatries prevalent in Philippi. Since her husband is not mentioned, we may infer that she was a widow. Hence it was her right, without conference with anybody, to invite the Apostle and his companions to share the hospitality of her home. She seems properly to have realized that, instead of honoring them, she was honoring herself and her household by having such guests – the ministers of God, the brethren of Christ – under her roof. Note her language when inviting: "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."

The latter statement implies that the Apostle was not too ready to force himself upon anybody, that he did not urge, saying, "Surely myself and my companions, who have preached to you, should be served by you in temporalities" – though this was the truth. Rather the Apostle made no reference to temporalities. Indeed, after Lydia's suggestion had been made, apparently it was not too quickly accepted, but with the indication that the disciples of Jesus had no desire to intrude upon others. This is implied in the statement that they were constrained – gradually drawn or led to accept the invitation. How beautiful it is to see God's children wisely exercised in such matters! How much more is their influence upon one another for good!

=====