

During his second missionary journey, Paul desired to take the gospel wherever he could. However, the Holy Spirit blocked him from taking the gospel to certain regions and called him in a direction that would result in the gospel spreading throughout Europe. We can only speculate why God guided the spread of the gospel west rather than east, except to trust His perfect will and wisdom.

**Verses 1-5:** Paul has begun his second missionary journey, this time accompanied by Silas (Acts 15:40-41), and is entering the region of Galatia (Asia Minor) from the east rather than from the south (sailing from Cyprus) as he and Barnabas had done on the first missionary journey. When he reaches the cities of Derbe and Lystra, he encounters a young man named Timotheus, whose mother was Jewish but his father was Greek. Timotheus had a good reputation as a believer in Christ and Paul recruits him to join them on their missionary journey. As they traveled from city to city, they deliver the decrees to each church that had been made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15:23-29).

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6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

Galatia was a region in central Asia Minor and Phrygia was the southern part of the western end of Asia Minor. After covering these regions, the next logical area to visit was Asia, which was north of Phrygia. However, God did not allow Paul to preach in this region at this time. We are not told how Paul understood that the Holy Ghost was forbidding them to preach there.

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7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

**“After they were come to Mysia, they assayed [to try; to test; to attempt] to go into Bithynia”** – Mysia was the region north of Asia on the western end of Asia Minor. Apparently Paul passed through Asia without preaching until he came to Mysia. From there he tried to go into Bithynia, which was NE of Mysia and Asia and was in the northern side of Asia Minor.

**“but the Spirit suffered them not”** – It might seem strange that God would not allow the preaching of the gospel, but we have to remember that Paul and his companions were not the only people preaching the gospel. God may have led others to eventually preach the gospel in Bithynia. All we can surmise from the Spirit’s prohibition here is that God had other plans for Paul. It does seem that the Spirit was guiding Paul in a direction that would eventually result in the gospel spreading throughout Europe instead of modern continent of Asia.

**“And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas”** – Paul and his companions were running out of directions to go, and so they travel west through Mysia until they reach the coastal town of Troas on the western tip of Asia Minor.

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9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

**“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night”** – We are not told what method God used to communicate earlier to Paul that he was not to preach in Asia or Bithynia (vs. 6-7), but here God chose to use a vision or dream.

**“There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us”** – The vision consisted of a man from Macedonia asking Paul to come help them in Macedonia. Paul obviously sees this man’s plea for help as referring to spiritual help. Macedonia was the region in the northern part of the peninsula of Greece and Achaia was the southern region.

**“And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia”** – Paul did not dismiss the vision as a meaningless dream. Both he and his companions immediately began making plans to travel to Macedonia. Notice the change in pronouns from “they” (v. 8) to “we.” Apparently this is because Luke has joined Paul’s group there at Troas and begins traveling with them. Presumably the group now consists of Paul, Silas, Timothy (vs. 1-3), and Luke.

**“assuredly gathering [to come to a conclusion] that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them”** – The group was in agreement that Paul’s vision was evidence that God was directing them to preach the gospel in Macedonia.

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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.

**“Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis”** – Paul and his companions sail from Troas, have an overnight stopover on the island of Samothracia (one of a group of islands in the northern part of the Aegean Sea), and arrive at Neapolis the next day. Neapolis was a seaport town on the mainland in the edge of Macedonia.

**“And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony”** – They traveled 10 miles inland from Neapolis to Philippi, a Roman colony founded by Caesar Augustus and a major city in that part of Macedonia.

**“and we were in that city abiding certain days”** – Philippi is not a stopover on his way deeper into Macedonia, but Paul remains in this city for an extended period of time and begins preaching the gospel to the Macedonians.

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*.

**“And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont [customary] to be made”** – Jewish custom required a minimum of 10 men who were heads of their households to warrant creating a synagogue in a town, so apparently there were few Jewish men in Philippi. In the absence of a synagogue, worshipers would choose a place in the open, near a river or sea if possible, as a place to meet in order to read scripture, pray and worship God. Paul typically went to the synagogues first, but in this case he found the spot by the river where the local worshipers would meet on the Sabbath.

**“and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*”** – The fact that those who gathered by the riverside were predominantly women further implies that there were too few Jewish men in the city for a synagogue. Paul and his companions sat down to share the gospel with these women who had met there by the riverside.

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.

**“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God”** – Luke introduces us to a woman named Lydia and tells us a few things about her. She is from Thyatira, a city in Asia Minor. One of the principal industries of Thyatira was the dying of fabric and Lydia was a “seller of purple.” Since purple was a royal color, fabric dyed purple was an expensive and profitable commodity, implying that Lydia was able to make a good living selling it. We are also told that Lydia worshiped God and the fact that she was gathering by the riverside with other worshipers implies that she may have been a proselyte to Judaism.

**“heard [to hear with understanding] us: whose heart the Lord opened [to open the mind or understanding]”** – In our natural state as sinful human being, we are unable to properly comprehend the things of God (**1 Cor. 2:14** “*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*”). God opened Lydia’s understanding and made her receptive to the gospel. The only way that we can understand and believe the things of God are if He opens our understanding. The Holy Spirit gives us this understanding, both before we are saved and especially after (Jesus summarizes the ministry of the Holy Spirit in John 16:7-13).

**“that she attended [to be attentive; to give heed] unto the things which were spoken of Paul”** – The result of God opening the heart of Lydia is that she paid attention to what Paul was preaching. She listened to the gospel and responded to it in faith (**Rom. 10:17** “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*”).

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.

**“And when she was baptized, and her household”** – One evidence that Lydia’s conversion was genuine is that not only did she believe the gospel that Paul preached, she also responded in obedience by being baptized. Faith that does not prompt obedience is not genuine faith (**James 2:17** “*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*”).

**“she besought [beg; plead] us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful [trustworthy] to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*”** – Another evidence of Lydia’s conversion is the love she immediately showed to those who had shared the gospel with her. She begs for Paul and his companions (on the basis of her faithfulness to the Lord) to be guests at her house while they were in Philippi. The fact that she had room for all of them at her house is another indication of her wealth.

**“And she constrained [compelled] us”** – Lydia apparently would not take “no” for an answer, insisting that they allow her to be their host for the remainder of their stay in Philippi.

**Verses 16-40:** As Paul and his companions continued to minister in Philippi, they encountered a slave-girl who had a demonic spirit which enabled her to be a fortune-teller. Paul cast the demonic spirit out of the girl, which angered her masters who had been making money through her ability. These men stir up the people and have Paul and Silas arrested, whipped, and cast into prison. That night in the prison around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises to God when an earthquake occurred that opened all the doors and the bonds of all the prisoners. The jailer, who had been suddenly awakened by the earthquake, believed all the prisoners had escaped and since he knew that he would be held responsible for their escape with his life, he was preparing to kill himself. However, Paul stopped him, assuring him that all of the prisoners were still there. The jailer was then ready to listen to what Paul and Silas had to say, and the pair shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with the man, who immediately believed and was saved. He brings Paul and Silas into his own house to treat their wounds from their earlier whipping and then feeds them. In the morning, word was sent from the magistrates that Paul and Silas should be released, but Paul insisted that the magistrates come down personally to release them since both he and Silas were Roman citizens and that they had had their rights violated by being illegally whipped and imprisoned. This demand frightened the magistrates, who came and begged Paul and Silas to leave the city, which they did.