

## 3.7.22 pm

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Date: 03 July 2022

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] Good evening, a warm welcome to the service this evening. Good evening, a warm welcome to the service this evening.

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[ 2 : 59 ] Good evening, a warm welcome to the service this evening. Good evening, a warm welcome to the service this evening. Good evening, a warm welcome to the service this evening.

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Here the disciples are, here there we have, aqua lad.

There are Hyperlane chapters on T recursos, the whole earth may be owned by Sir Chisdao.

Thank you.

[ 4 : 19 ] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. If you could turn down your Bibles, please, to Acts chapter 16. And I'm going to just read this passage and I'll make a few comments on the way.

[ 6 : 54 ] Just a shorter message this evening. And I suppose the reason that we're in Acts 16 is because of the, well, in the thought process, it's because of the Gaelic service last Sunday evening.

And Reverend Dolan was in Acts 16. And although I don't get too much of the Gaelic service, I got enough to receive a blessing as we were in that passage.

And my mind has been in that passage since then. And it just seems like a really good passage to dwell upon as we come to a testimony evening. And I'm sorry, those from the live stream, you won't actually hear the testimony.

But when you're on the bus with DJ, you can stop him and ask him in real life for his testimony. But it just seemed like a good passage to dwell upon.

There are three testimonies in this passage, three accounts of what God did in the lives of various people. So very briefly, we'll look at just a part of Acts chapter 16.

[ 8 : 00 ] And we begin in verse 6. And the title, the point that I would make as we look at verses 6 down to verse 12 is that God opened the way.

We see Paul and his companions in ministry. And they're trying to figure out which way to go. And God opened the way in the work of the gospel for them.

So verse 6. Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. There's a reminder there, the Spirit of Jesus.

This is the continuing act of Jesus. Yes, he's using Paul, he's using Timothy, he's using Silas and various other people. But it's Jesus who is at work.

[ 9 : 05 ] So when they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, come over to Macedonia and help us.

After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. From Troas, we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis.

From there, we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony, and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there for several days.

So the first thing we see here is that God, he opens the way. As they move from place to place, it's God who is opening the way.

And if we watch our news just now, I was speaking to a friend this week, he was hoping to head off to Tenerife, I think it was, but he was saying, who knows if I'll get there? Between trains and planes and flights cancelled and all the logistics, who knows if we'll get there or if we'll be standing for half a day in an airport?

[10:26] Because nothing is straightforward in terms of travel at present. And Paul and his companions were having that kind of a difficult time. They weren't having an easy time as they tried to figure out where to go.

They were kept, verse 6, from preaching the word in the province of Asia. How that happened, we're not sure. Why that happened, we're not told. But they were kept from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

They couldn't get over the border, verse 7, to enter into Bithynia. Clearly they had the desire to do so. But they were kept at the border there.

So they end up on a very different course to perhaps what was in their minds. So what was going on? As they're making plans and changing plans and trying to figure out where to go and what to do.

Well, what was going on was that God was at work. And in Providence, there's no great miracles.

[11:35] They're not seeing lights in the sky or anything. But just as they knock doors and as they try to take a step forward, sometimes they're making no progress. And other times ways open up before them.

And God was at work. And God was the one who opened up the way that he wanted them to go. Because God had determined that certain people in Europe would hear the gospel and be given the opportunity to be saved.

So this is the passage, actually, where the gospel message, the good news about Jesus, first enters into Europe. And it begins with Lydia and the slave girl and the Philippian jailer that we'll look at.

But still tonight, God is working in Europe. He's working in Scotland. He's working in Harris.

He's working in this place. Even if we bring it to the very, very personal level, the people who are in this building tonight and the people who maybe are watching at a distance, we are in this place because God has ordered in our lives that we will be here.

[12:59] And as the Bible is read, God speaks. That's why I like to read huge chunks of the Bible. Because it's through his word that he speaks.

And as he speaks, he is giving us the opportunity to trust in Jesus and to be saved.

So the first thing there, as we go through from verses 6 to verse 12, is we see that God opened a way for Paul and for his companions in the work of the gospel.

The second thing is that God opens a heart. An individual singular heart. And we see that in verses 13 to 15. On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the river where we expected to find a place of prayer.

We sat down and began to speak to the woman who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God.

[14:04] The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. If you consider me a believer in the Lord, she said, come and stay at my house.

And she persuaded us. So there's the first testimony in the chapter. The first convert in Europe.

And it's Lydia. And we could say as we look at this testimony that in one sense it's not very dramatic. There's no great drama and spectacle in this testimony.

Paul, he eventually arrives in this place in Philippi. And he does what he always does. And he looks for a place of prayer.

He looks for a synagogue. And in these areas, you had to have ten Jewish men in order to have a synagogue. And presumably in Philippi here, there wasn't enough men in that area to open up a synagogue.

[15:15] And so he wanders around and he goes down to the river. And he finds these women in the place of prayer.

No fancy church. Just a river. And a few women who have gathered to pray. And God was at work there.

You know, and that's of great encouragement for us. We see a whole lot of empty chairs and churches wherever we go. And we always want to see more people.

But even if there was only half a dozen here tonight, we can expect God will be at work. We can be in a wee mission hall somewhere. Handful of people.

You know, the possibility of it closing. God can be at work in there. We can be in a little room in a house with just two or three people who are looking into the things of God.

[16:22] Not some great cathedral. And yet God can be at work in the little room and perhaps not so much in the great cathedral. And so God was at work in this little Riverside prayer meeting.

And there were various women there. One was called Lydia. She was a successful businesswoman. She was a dealer in purple. Which meant that she was kind of in the sector of the market that dealt in designer clothing.

She was providing clothing for the rich and famous. Purple was high-end gear. It had to be imported. It cost a fortune. Purple dye was very expensive to work with.

And so Lydia, she has this very successful business. She would have been well off. And we're told that she was a worshipper of God. And that was a technical term that was used at that time.

Which meant that she was interested. But she wasn't committed. She was in the church, you could say. But she wasn't in Christ.

[17:30] She was nominal. There was an interest there. But she was not yet saved. Seeking. But she hadn't yet been found. And so Paul began to preach the gospel message.

And very simply. And yet supernaturally, amazingly. God opens Lydia's heart. And she opens Lydia's heart. He looks down into this wee prayer meeting.

Sees this one lady. And he opens her heart. And she hears the gospel message.

She responds to the gospel message. And she believes in Jesus. And we know that she believes in Jesus. Because she professes her faith immediately.

She doesn't keep it a secret. She doesn't wander off for the next ten years. And debate in her mind back and forth. As to whether she should say anything about this.

[18:36] Or step forward. Immediately she believes. She professes her faith. And immediately she's professed her faith. She begins to practice hospitality. So she opens her home.

And she asks Paul and his companions to come in. And to enjoy hospitality. So we see that there's a work of grace in our life.

We're saved by grace through faith. We're saved by Jesus. Ephesians 2.8 and 9. But once we're saved.

There are good works. Ephesians 2.10. That God prepares in advance for us to do. And Lydia immediately. She's on that. Her home is open.

And she's such a blessing to Paul. And to those who are with him. So you could say. There's no great drama here. It's a very different testimony.

[19:37] To the testimony that the apostle Paul would have told. But it's real. And it's probably the most common testimony.

I think for most of us who are Christians. We would say that God. He gently. And gradually.

Opens our hearts. And very often. It's during a time of worship. When the word of God is opened. Whether it's in a church.

Or whether somebody in our work has. Told us a Bible story. Or passed us a Christian magazine. Or spoken to us. Because. Very often.

The story goes. That when we hear the gospel message. God opens our hearts. And we believe.

[20:36] And we are saved. And there might be a Lydia here tonight. I don't know. Somebody who. Is a worshipper of God. In the.

In the nominal sense. And who comes to church. And who may. Have an interest in. In spiritual things. But has never yet. Actually given. Their life to Jesus.

And maybe tonight. God. And the power of the Holy Spirit. Is. Is opening a heart. If you can see your sin. If you can see Jesus.

And all that he did on the cross. Then God is at work. And he is giving. The opportunity. To us. That he gave to Lydia. And it's to believe.

And to be saved. So God. He opens. The way. For Paul. And his companions. In the gospel work. He opens a heart. That's the first testimony.

[ 21 : 35 ] Lydia. And the next thing is. That God. He opens. He opens a lot. He opens the chains. That were. Binding this. Poor slave girl. And that's verses.

16 to 18. Once. Says Paul. When we were going. To the place of prayer. We were met by a slave girl. Who had a spirit. By which she predicted. The future. She earned a great deal of money.

For her owners. By fortune telling. This girl. Followed Paul. And the rest of us. Shouting. These men are servants. Of the most high God. Who are telling you.

The way. To be saved. She kept us up. For many days. Finally. Paul became so troubled. That he turned around. And said to the spirit.

In the name. Of Jesus. Christ. I command you. To come out of her. And at that moment. The spirit left her. So the second testimony here.

[ 22 : 34 ] You could say. It has more drama in it. Paul. He's on his way. To the place of prayer. As he so often was. But he's met by a slave girl. He's intercepted.

By this slave girl. And she was chained. To her masters. But she was actually chained. To a more powerful master.

She had masters in this world. That had taken control of her. And they were using her. Her insight. Her ability to see the future.

They were using that for commercial gain. They bought her. They owned her. And they used. This. Gift that she had.

This dark gift. That she had. To make themselves money. But. This poor girl. Was chained. To a more powerful master. There was an evil spirit.

[ 23 : 32 ] That had control of her. And this evil spirit. Was. Giving her the opportunity. The ability. To predict.

The future. So this girl. She's. Following Paul. And his companions around. And. She's drawing a whole lot of attention. To them.

Paul. Is trying to. Preach the gospel. And when one tries to preach the gospel. You're not drawing attention to yourself. You're pointing to Jesus. And yet this girl. As she follows them around. She's pointing.

Everybody to Paul. And his companions. So she's taking the focus off Jesus. And she says. What we have in the NIV here. Is. This that comes from our mouth.

These men are servants of the most high God. Who are telling you. The way to be saved. The Greek is less definite than that. The Greek. Is more like. These men are telling you.

[ 24 : 28 ] A way. To be saved. So she's. Sowing a seed of doubt. That maybe this is one way. Of many ways. Through which you can be saved.

And so she's subtly. Working in a way. To point them away from Jesus. And to point them away from the salvation. That comes only through Jesus. And so Paul. As he looks at her.

He speaks directly to the evil spirit in her. And he says. In the name of Jesus Christ. I command you to come out of her. And at that moment. The spirit.

Left her. And she. Is an illustration of the song that we sang. Her chains were gone.

And she was set free. And that was what Jesus did. Through Paul. And that's what Jesus still can do.

[ 25 : 27 ] To those who come to him. He can. Break the chains that bind us. And he does it through his. Amazing grace. We may not be chained by an evil spirit.

Although some still are. Still we are living. In a world. Whether it's. Dark. Spiritual forces. Demons. Evil spirits. Are not fairy tale stuff. This is reality. Still there are those. Who are chained by evil spirits. But. We may be chained by an addiction. We can be chained to a love of money.

We can be chained to. A fear of what people. Think of us. We can be chained to a desire. To want to. To be approved by people. In this world. We can be chained to all kinds of worries.

And the good news of the gospel. Is that. That Jesus can break these chains. Jesus can open up.

[ 26 : 26 ] The locks. And make us free. If we trust him. And that was this girl's testimony. Jesus broke her chains.

He opened the lock. Where she was bound. And gave her this freedom. So that's the second testimony. And we see Lydia.

It's gentle. It's undramatic. And we see this slave girl. And there's a whole lot more drama. Both in her testimony. And in what follows it. Because we read in verse 19.

When the owners of the slave girl. Realised that their hope of making money was gone. They seized Paul and Silas. And dragged them into the marketplace. To face the authorities. They brought them before the magistrates.

And said. These men are Jews. And they are throwing our city into an uproar. By advocating customs. Unlawful for us Romans to accept. Or practice.

[ 27 : 28 ] The crowd joined in. In the attack against Paul and Silas. And the magistrates ordered them. To be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged. They were thrown into the prison.

And the jailer was commanded. To guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders. He put them in the inner cell. And fastened their feet. In the stalks.

And this is the final point. Briefly. God opened a prison. He opened the way. For the gospel. He opened the heart of Lydia.

He opened the lock and chains. Of the slave girl. And finally God opens a prison. And why does he open a prison? Well. First of all. He opens a prison.

So that Paul and Silas. Can actually get into it. Because. Paul was a Roman citizen. And we learn that. At the end of the chapter. You can do that yourselves. Later on this evening.

[ 28 : 26 ] If you read it. But. The law stated. That a Roman citizen. Couldn't just be thrown into prison. There had to be due process. So Paul. Shouldn't have been in that prison.

By law. Paul didn't need to be in that prison. But Paul. Seems to recognize. In the drama. Of all this scene.

That God was opening the door. Into this prison. And so. Battered. And bruised. And cut. And beaten.

As God opens the door. Paul goes in. Verse 25. About midnight. Paul and Silas. Were praying. And singing hymns.

To God. And the other prisoners. Were listening to them. And suddenly. There was such a violent earthquake. That the foundations. Of the prison. Were shaken. At once.

[ 29 : 24 ] All the prison doors. Flew open. And everybody's chains. Came loose. So what was God doing? Well. He was working.

He'd worked. In the. The quietness. Of the prayer meeting. Down by the river. And now God was. Was working. In the midst of this. Earthquake. In this prison. God had opened the door.

For Paul and Silas. To go in. And now God opened the door. So that everyone. Could go out. But no one moved. The jailer woke up.

Verse 27. And when he saw. The prison doors open. He drew his sword. And was about to kill himself. Because he thought. The prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted.

Don't harm yourself. We are all here. The jailer called for lights. Rushed in. And fell trembling. Before Paul. And Silas. He brought them out.

[ 30 : 26 ] And asked sirs. What must I do. To be saved? They replied. Believe. In the Lord Jesus Christ. And you will be saved. You and your household. Then they spoke.

The word of the Lord. To him. And to all the others. In the house. At that hour of the night. The jailer took them. And washed their wounds. Then immediately. He and his family.

Were baptized. The jailer brought them. Into his house. And set a meal. Before them. He was filled with joy. Because he had come. To believe. In God. He. And his whole.

Family. So the Philippian jailer's testimony. It's quite a story. There's a whole lot of drama in it. No but sadly. Sometimes that's what's needed. With some people. God moves. Very gently. And they believe gladly.

[ 31 : 28 ] Like Lydia. And with others. There needs to be an earthquake. Their whole world needs to come crashing down.

Before they believe. And for this jailer. Who would have been a retired Roman soldier. A hard man. That needs to happen.

His whole world comes crashing down. He's about to end his life. Because he knows. If anyone escapes from the prison. He's done for.

But in the midst of all the drama. In the midst of that evening. He cries out to Paul. And he says. What do I need to do. To be saved. What do I need to do. To. To have the hope. That you have. That would cause you. In your bleeding.

[ 32 : 27 ] Battered state. To be singing. And praying. At midnight. In a dirty. Freezing cold cell. And Paul says.

Believe. In the Lord Jesus Christ. And you will be saved. And he did. So three testimonies. Very different. But the one thing. That was in common. Was they all. Believed. In the Lord Jesus Christ. And they were saved. And the question.

For us tonight. Is. Is will we believe. As God works. In whatever way. Through whatever means. As he takes us.

To this point. That's the call. Believe. In the Lord Jesus Christ. And you will be saved. So may we. Be given faith.

[ 33 : 27 ] That we would believe. And be saved. And have a testimony. To share. When God calls us to. And we'll pray. Lord.

We thank you for this. Passage. We thank you for these testimonies. And we thank you. That you are the God. Who is still at work. And we pray. That you would be at work. Tonight.

In our hearts. And we pray. That each of us. Would hear. The gospel message. As Lydia did. Dead. And we pray. That the chains.

That bind us. Would be. Would be broken. We pray. That we would believe. In the Lord Jesus Christ. And be saved. And we thank you Lord.

For DJ. And for his willingness. To share his testimony. And we pray. That as he. Prepares to come up. In just a minute. And share just. A few words. We ask Lord. That you would bless him.

[ 34 : 21 ] That you would speak through him. That you would help him to know. That you are with him. And that you would reach us Lord. As we hear. Of your work in his life. And we pray this in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. cesser that you would. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.