

# Are You Open to God's Will?

Sunday 5/26 at 8:00 & 10:45 | Monday 5/27 at 7 PM

Sixth Sunday of Easter – 2019

Ascension Day – Thursday, May 30: Meal at 6; Divine Service at 7

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: We are back in the book of Acts again, *now in chapter 16*. Paul and Barnabas had been working together; however, *after a sharp disagreement*, ♦Barnabas went off to serve with Mark while ♦Paul went off to serve with Silas. Disagreements are generally NOT good; however, with God's blessing, *the one missionary team became two!* Not long after that time, *Paul also recruited Timothy to join his missionary team.*

Just before today's text, the Bible tells us about the journey of Paul, Silas, and Timothy in the area we know of today as Turkey; the Bible tells us that they “went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas [an ancient port on the western coast of modern-day Turkey]” (Acts 16:6-8 ESV).

- “the Spirit of Jesus” – An *unusual* phrase, appearing only twice in the Bible (above and in [Phil. 1:19](#)). We generally think of the Holy Spirit being the Spirit of the Father; however, since the Father gave Him to the Son, and then the Son gave Him to believers, we can call Him ♦*the Spirit of the Father* or ♦*the Spirit of the Son*.

- “did not allow them” – This is “...one of the plain cases in which the Spirit closes and opens doors for missionary work” (Lenski, 647). The Holy Spirit is still at work today *through God’s Word* to guide believers in their lives and work and put sinners in possession of God’s forgiveness *by grace through faith in Jesus!*

1. **The Vision:** <sup>9</sup> And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a [certain] man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” <sup>10</sup> And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. <sup>11</sup> So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace [an island in the Aegean Sea], and the following day to Neapolis [a port on the southern coast of Macedonia and the harbor of Philippi], <sup>12</sup> and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.

- a. Paul saw a vision: It was not just a dream, but God made it clear to Paul about Going to Macedonia, *an area populated mostly by Gentiles*. That fits right in with what the Lord had said to Ananias concerning Paul, “he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15 ESV). Then, *immediately*, the very next day, *they boarded a ship that was heading to Macedonia!* Since Paul was open to God’s will, *he followed immediately!* What is God’s will for you: being a summer SS teacher, helping with our grounds, telling someone about Jesus?
- b. “we sought to go on into Macedonia” – the “we” reference indicates that Luke, the writer, was with Paul, Silas, and Timothy at this time! That was “Luke’s

quiet... yet distinct testimony... that he was present with Paul and an eyewitness of the events recorded [also: 16:10-17; 20:5 – 21:25; 27:2 – 28:16]” (Lenski, 650).

c. Philippi, a Roman colony: Philippi initially became a real city by Philip, *the father of Alexander the Great*; then, about 300 years later, *it was elevated to the status of the Roman colonies in Italy* (Lenski, 652).

2. **The Lord’s Work**: **We remained in this city** [of Philippi] **some days.** <sup>13</sup> **And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.** <sup>14</sup> **One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention [give heed] to what was said by Paul.** <sup>15</sup> **And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.**

a. They sought out ones who might listen: Paul was now in Europe, *Gentle territory*; there was no synagogue in Philippi, so Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke sought out a location where people gathered to pray. When they found the place by the river, *only women were present*; nevertheless, they probably ♦introduced themselves, ♦explained their work, and ♦began to teach those women the Word of God about sin and Jesus!

b. The Lord opened Lydia’s heart: Lenski described the Lord’s work like this: “**The Lord opens the heart, but the hand with which he lifts the latch and draws the**

door is the Word which he makes us hear, and the door opens as we... keep holding our mind to what we hear (658). *Let's break down that process:*

- i. How does the Lord **begin** to open the door of our heart? "...the hand with which he lifts the latch and draws the door is the **Word** which he makes us hear..." For many *the Word goes in one ear and out the other*, but, for us, the Lord enables us hear His Word!
- ii. How does the Lord **continue** to open the door of our heart? "...the door opens as we [by God's grace and power] ...keep holding our mind to what we hear." So it is the Lord, thus the Holy Spirit, who *makes us interested and causes us to think!*
- iii. Can an unbeliever help the Lord? Lenski gave this answer: "**No man can open the door... nor can he help the Lord...**" Why? All are spiritually dead, *until God makes them alive in Christ (Eph. 2:1, 4-5)!*
- iv. Can an unbeliever reject God's Word? Yes! Lenski wrote: "**The one thing [man] can do is to bolt the door... refuse to hear and to heed...**" For all such people, let us *keep sharing the Word and praying for them to hear and heed and benefit!*

**This Week's Challenge:** *As Paul was open to God's will, let us be the same!*

**Let Us Pray:** Dear Holy Spirit, as You enable us to hear, heed, and benefit, *so grant the same to many others!*

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