

Spreading the Word

Acts 16:1-5, 8-15

SS Lesson for 11/15/2015

Devotional Scripture: Acts 26:11-20

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reviews how all of us as Christians should be active in some way in the **Spreading of the Word**. The **study's aim** is to recognize the importance of prayer in the worldwide spread of the gospel. The **study's application** is to be burdened to see a more rapid spread of the gospel.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Acts 16:10

Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Timothy, whose home was **Lystra**, was of mixed parentage; his **mother was Jewish** and his **father was a Greek**. Probably Timothy had been converted under Paul's ministry during the apostle's first visit to Lystra (cf. 1 Tim. 1:2). Some suggest he had been led to the Lord by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). At any rate, he became Paul's protege. Because of Timothy's good reputation (Acts 16:2) **Paul wanted to take him along on the journey**, probably as a helper as Mark had been. There was a problem, however. The Jews to whom Paul would be preaching the gospel would be offended if a man with a Jewish mother was uncircumcised. So Timothy was **circumcised**. Apparently he had been uncircumcised because of his father's influence. This appears to contradict Paul's thinking in Galatians 2:3-5 where he refused to let Titus be circumcised. The situations, however, were different. In Galatians 2 the issue was the method of justification; here it was a question of not giving offense (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). The Jerusalem Council, of course, had determined circumcision was not necessary for salvation (Acts 15:10-11, 19). In Acts 16 Paul acted as he did for the sake of the ministry; it was a wise move. **As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the Jerusalem Council** (15:23-29). Assuming Paul wrote Galatians after the first missionary journey, but before the Jerusalem Council, the report of the decision would be strong confirmation of the gospel which he preached and about which he wrote. With another "progress report", Luke brought another section of his book to a close. The word **strengthened** (*estereounto*, "being made solid or firm") differs from its synonym *epistērīzō* ("to strengthen"; 14:22; 15:32, 41).

God's guidance was at first negative. Evidently the missionary party first attempted to go to the western **province of Asia** whose leading city was Ephesus. So they went **throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia** (cf. 18:23). Possibly this should be understood as the Phrygian region of Galatia. **They** then proceeded north to eastern **Mysia** and **tried to enter Bithynia, but** again they were prevented from doing so by **the Spirit of Jesus**. How these hindrances were accomplished is not stated. It may have been circumstances, a word of prophecy, a vision, or some other phenomenon. At any rate, God planned for people in both Ephesus and Bithynia to hear the gospel at a later time (cf. 18:19-21, 24-19:41; 1 Peter 1:1). Finally, at **Troas**, a seaport city on the Aegean Sea near the ancient site of Troy, God gave positive direction by means of a **night... vision to Paul**. **Macedonia** was a Roman senatorial province, corresponding roughly to northern Greece today. The first of the **we** sections begins here in Acts, indicating that Luke joined the party of Paul, Silas, and Timothy. The how, why, and precise location of Luke's joining the group are left unstated.

The journey **from Troas to Samothrace** and **to Neapolis**, the seaport city for Philippi, was a rapid one, implying that the wind was with them (cf. 20:6 where the trip in the opposite direction took five days). **From Neapolis** the missionaries **traveled** the 10 miles on the Via Egnatia, the Egnatian Road **to Philippi**, which Luke described as **a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia**. Quite clearly Luke displayed pride in the city he came to love. Some say he grew up and attended medical school

there. Philippi, originally named Crenides (“Fountains”), was taken by Philip of Macedon and renamed after him. In 168 B.C. Philippi became a Roman possession. After Mark Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar, near Philippi in 42 B.C., the city was made into a Roman colony. This gave it special privileges (e.g. fewer taxes) but more importantly it became like a “transplanted” Rome. The primary purpose of colonies was military, for the Roman leaders felt it wise to have Roman citizens and sympathizers settled in strategic locations. So Octavian (who became Caesar Augustus, the first Roman emperor, in 27 B.C.) settled more colonists (primarily former soldiers) at Philippi after his defeat of Antony at Actium, on Greece’s west coast, in 31 B.C. The Jewish population at Philippi must have been limited, for there was no synagogue there; 10 Jewish males were required for a synagogue. **A place of prayer** (cf. v. 16), which may have been a place in the open air or a simple building, was located by **the Gangites River** about a mile and one-half west of town.

To the women... gathered there, the missionaries presented the gospel. **Lydia** was a seller of **purple cloth**. This purple color came from a shellfish, the murex, or from the root of a plant. She was from **Thyatira**, a city known for its commerce in Asia Minor. She **was a worshiper of God**, a term used for Gentiles (e.g., Cornelius [Acts 10:2] and those in Thessalonica [17:4] and Athens [17:17]) who were not proselytes to Judaism but who did worship Yahweh. Even so, they were not in the New Testament church, the body of Christ. **The Lord opened her heart** (cf. Luke 24:45) **to respond to Paul’s message**. Again Luke stressed the sovereignty of God in salvation (cf. Acts 13:48). Lydia was then **baptized**, apparently soon after her faith in Christ. **The members of her household** probably refer to servants as well as to her children, if she was a widow. Other persons in the New Testament who along with their “household” members came to Christ include Cornelius (10:24, 44), the Philippian jailer (16:31), Crispus (18:8), Aristobulus (Rom. 16:10), Narcissus (Rom. 16:11), and Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16). That she was a woman of considerable means is evidenced by the size of her **house**. It would have to be ample enough to house four men as well as her household without embarrassment (cf. Acts 16:40). Some men were exploiting a demon-possessed **slave girl** for her ability to predict the future. The English words, **a spirit by which she predicted the future**, translate two Greek words, “a spirit, a python.” This concept goes back to the Greek city of Delphi where the god Apollo was believed to be embodied in a python snake. The original priestess at Delphi was purported to be possessed by Apollo and thereby able to predict the future; therefore anyone possessed by the python spirit could foretell coming events. No doubt an actual demon gave such a person predictive powers. Demons took advantage of people’s worship of false gods (cf. 17:23; 1 Cor. 10:20). The **girl** attached herself to **Paul and the others** and was **shouting** (imperf. tense) who they were (**servants of the Most High God**) and what they preached (**the way to be saved**). Though her statements were true, the gospel of Christ would be damaged by an association with a demon-possessed slave girl. So after **many days... Paul** exorcised the demon, speaking directly **to the spirit**. (Other cases of victory over the occult in Acts are recorded in 8:9-24; 13:6-12; 19:13-20.)

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Many churches use the words Macedon or Macedonian in naming classes, ministries, or publications. The phrase Macedonian call has come to designate a summons to be a missionary. The idea comes from Acts 16:9, which is part of today’s text. Some claim that the era of foreign missions is over. But mission opportunities definitely still exist, given that more than 4 billion people worldwide do not claim Christ as Savior! Although we should not expect to receive a call in a vision as the apostle Paul did, today’s lesson will help us understand the heart and challenges of a person whose life was dedicated to cross-cultural evangelism.

Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-18:22) was prefaced by his desire to revisit the churches he planted during his first journey (15:36). He needed to communicate the decision of the Jerusalem Council: Gentiles were not expected to keep the Jewish law in order to be part of the church. This expedition was almost blown apart at the outset when Paul and Barnabas had a tense disagreement over the advisability of taking along John Mark, a relative of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). John Mark had abandoned them on the first

journey (Acts 12:25; 13:5, 13), and Barnabas wanted to give him a second chance (15:37). But Paul would have none of it (15:38). Therefore, they divided into two teams: Barnabas and John Mark returned to the island of Cyprus (15:39), the home territory of Barnabas (4:36), while Paul recruited Silas, a respected church leader (15:22), to accompany him (15:40, 41). The year was about AD 52.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Need for Helpers (Acts 16:1-3)

1 Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek.

2 He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

3 Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

Helpers who are believers (1-2)

Believers who help because of being members of the Body (1 Cor 12:24-26)

24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Believers who help because of it is God who works in them (Phil 2:12-13)

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Believers who help because of doing God's will (Matt 12:48-50)

48 He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Believers who help because of wanting to help those in need (Matt 25:40)

40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Believers who help because of the predestination of God (Rom 8:29)

29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Helpers who are obedient (3)

Obedience that keeps one focused on the right priority (Matt 16:24-26)

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. 26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Obedience that helps one stand firm (1 Cor 15:58)

58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Obedience that has the motive of love (2 John 1:6)

6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Obedience that comes from the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2)

2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Obedience that is an obligation (Rom 8:12-14)

12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

The Need for Encouragement and Strengthening (Acts 16:4-5)

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Encouragement through providing understanding (4)

Understanding through the knowledge of God (2 Cor 4:6)

6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Understanding of the secrets of heaven (Matt 13:11-12)

11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

Understanding that is hidden in Jesus (Col 2:2-3)

2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Understanding that comes from the mind of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:13-16)

13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because

they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: 16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Understanding that is taught by God (John 6:45)

45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.

Understanding through anointing (1 John 2:27)

27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him.

Strengthening through faith (5)

Strengthen through faith by seeking others to pray for us (Luke 22:32)

32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Strengthen through faith through the encouragement of others (1 Thess 3:2)

2 We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith,

Strengthen through faith by the testing of our faith (2 Cor 13:5)

5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test?

Strengthen through faith by maturation (2 Peter 1:5-8)

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Strengthen through faith by abiding in Jesus (John 15:5)

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Strengthen through faith by enduring trials (James 1:2-4)

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

The Need to be Led by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:8-15)

8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

11 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, 12 and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.

13 And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.

14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

Led through visions (8-10)

Conviction through visions (Acts 10:11-15)

11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. 12 It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. 13 Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." 14 "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." 15 The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

Visions through the power of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29)

28 'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

God can visit us in our dreams (Gen 28:10-12)

10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

God can visit us through visions (Num 12:6)

6 he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams.

Attention can be obtained through visions (Acts 9:10)

10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.

Led through prayer (11-13)

Led through prayer because it guides into God's calling on one's life (Acts 13:1-3)

13 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Led through prayer because it supplies wisdom (James 1:5)

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Led through prayer to combat anxiousness (Phil 4:6)

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Led through prayer so that we will not fall into temptation (Matt 26:41)

41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Led through prayer to obtain a mind that is clear and self-controlled (1 Peter 4:7)

7 The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

Led to fellowship with other believers (14-15)

Fellowship through being concerned for each other (1 Cor 12:25-26)

25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Fellowship through being united with Jesus (Phil 2:1-4)

2 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Fellowship through being one in Christ (Gal 3:26-28)

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Fellowship through being of one body and calling (Eph 4:4-6)

4 There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Fellowship through love (Col 3:14)

14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Fellowship through living in harmony with one another (1 Peter 3:8)

8 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Luke tells us that Paul and Silas traveled from Derbe to Lystra (verse 1), but in Acts 14, they traveled from Lystra to Derbe (Acts 14:8-20). The explanation is clear when one looks at a map of Paul's first and second missionary journeys. On the first journey, they first sailed to Cyprus, and then sailed north from Cyprus to Asia Minor, coming to Perga. From here, they traveled south to Pisidian Antioch, Lystra, and finally Derbe. They then retraced their steps to Perga, and finally sailed from Attalia to Syrian Antioch. On the second missionary journey, they traveled from Antioch in Syria to Asia Minor by land, traveling north. And thus they came to these cities in reverse order. Two things are prominent in verses 1-5 of chapter 16. First, we have Luke's report of how Paul chose Timothy to accompany him (verses 1-3). Second, we have a brief report about

the delivery of the letter from the Jerusalem leaders, and its impact on the Galatian churches (verses 4-5). It is hard to think of the selection of Timothy as anything but a replacement for John Mark (just as Silas was a replacement for Barnabas). I find it most interesting that Mark's replacement is said to have come from the city of Lystra, and that he was highly recommended by the believers in Lystra and Iconium. Lystra, you will recall, is the city where Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19-20). I wonder if Timothy was one of those surrounding Paul's body when he was laying there. My point in this is that Timothy lived in a very dangerous place, and yet his testimony was highly respected by the Christians who knew him and his testimony in that dangerous place. While John Mark was a young man who bailed out before they even reached Lystra, Timothy was a young man who emerged in the midst of opposition and danger. Here was the kind of young man whom Paul could trust when things got rough.

Our text is the commencement of a long and very close relationship between Paul and Timothy. Several times, Paul speaks of Timothy as "**his son**" in the faith. Just as there is a bond between a child and the mother who bore it through painful labor, so there seems to have been a bond between Timothy and Paul, who was stoned in the very city where Timothy lived. Timothy was one of those very rare folks who shared the same vision for ministry as Paul (Philippians 2:19-22). What an encouragement this young man must have been to Paul, his spiritual father in the faith. The question in the minds of most is not Timothy's qualifications to serve, but why Paul had him circumcised. This is a particularly glaring problem in light of the decision of the Jerusalem Council and the events that surrounded it (Galatians 2:1-5). There were those who were teaching the believers that in order for a Gentile to be saved they must, like a Jew, be circumcised and then keep the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1, 5). When Paul went to Jerusalem, he took Barnabas and Titus along with him. The Judaisers insisted that Titus must be circumcised because he was a Greek. Paul absolutely refused because it would compromise the gospel. It was the gospel that was at stake here, and Paul would not allow it to be perverted into a system of works, rather than grace. Why then would Paul soon thereafter circumcise Timothy? Was Paul compromising the gospel in doing so? Not at all! Titus was a Gentile, and everyone knew it. Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother, but his father was a Greek. Circumcising Timothy identified him as a Jew. As such, he could accompany Paul wherever he went. Circumcision did not compromise the gospel, because no Jews were demanding that he be circumcised. No one was insisting that he had to be circumcised in order to be saved. Circumcision was Timothy's identification with the faith of his mother, and this enabled him to minister to the Jews more effectively (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). It was Paul who wanted Timothy to be circumcised in order to minister more effectively, not some Jewish false brethren who were demanding that he be circumcised in order to be saved. Timothy was not really a Gentile either, and these factors made all the difference in the world. The gospel was therefore not compromised, but rather it was promoted by Timothy's circumcision. As this missionary team passed through the cities of Galatia, cities that had heard the gospel on the first missionary journey, they delivered the decrees which had been determined by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. In this way, the churches were freed from the burden the Judaisers sought to impose upon new Gentile converts. And thus the churches were being strengthened in the faith and were growing daily in number. Grace not only gives life to those who are dead in their sins, it produces growth in those who have been saved. Those who are saved by faith are to walk by faith, and thus to grow in their relationship with God through Christ.

The Macedonian Call

Acts 16:6-10

As initially proposed by Paul, their mission had been fulfilled (Acts 15:36). Paul, Silas, and Timothy have visited the Galatian churches and have delivered the decrees from the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem. They have no doubt taught these churches additional truths they needed to know. But having completed this part of this journey, they sought to press on to preach the gospel elsewhere.

The second missionary journey is something like a two-stage rocket launching. The first stage gets the rocket off the ground and into the air. Then this stage is jettisoned and the second stage is ignited, taking it much farther into space. So it was with this missionary journey. The first stage took Paul and his companions back to the churches that had been planted earlier. Having completed this "stage" of the mission, it is time for the second "stage" to be launched. The ways in which God guided them to the "second stage" of their mission are both interesting and informative. We would like to have been told a great deal more than Luke has included

in his account. I believe that Luke's report is all that we need to know, and that additional information may even have proven to be counter-productive. God first used "closed doors" to guide these missionaries. In some unspecified way, the Holy Spirit prevented them from preaching in Asia. How we would love to know the means the Spirit employed to make this clear to Paul and the others. The problem is that we would probably expect God to guide us in the same way. The important thing is that Paul and his associates recognized this closed door as God's guidance. For whatever reason, they were not to preach the gospel in Asia on this trip. Having been prevented from preaching the gospel in Asia, they ventured on to Mysia, but they were prevented from proceeding on to Bithynia. Once again the "**Spirit of Jesus**" would not allow them to do so. Since God closed these doors, the missionaries made their way to Troas on the coast of the Aegean Sea. This is something like Moses and the Israelites on the shores of the Red Sea, wondering where they can go. This was a critical point in this second missionary journey. God had prevented them from preaching in Asia and Bithynia, but He has not yet informed them as to where they are to preach. During the night, Paul receives a vision which we have come to know as the "Macedonian Vision":

9 A vision appeared to Paul during the night: A Macedonian man was standing there urging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" 10 After Paul saw the vision, **we** attempted immediately to go over to Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them (Acts 16:9-10, emphasis mine).

The vision came to Paul in the night. He saw a man urging him to "**Come over to Macedonia and help us!**" The entire group recognized this as divine guidance and immediately began seeking to go over to Macedonia to preach the gospel. There is a subtle, but informative, clue to be found in verse 10: "**After Paul saw the vision, we attempted immediately to go over to Macedonia. . . .**" Suddenly Luke's account shifts from the third person ("**they**") to the first person ("**we**"). Luke seems to have joined these missionaries in Troas. He will soon disappear, only to reappear with Paul in Acts 20:6. At such times, Luke is reporting from personal experience.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/great-debates-acts-161-10>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The Joshua Project identifies over 7,000 of the more than 16,000 people groups in the world today as "unreached." This means that less than 2 percent of their populations are evangelical Christians, or that less than 5 percent are Christians of any type. Missions experts contend that these unreached people groups will never be evangelized without intentional, strategic, cross-cultural missions efforts. Christians must be sent to them with the gospel. What other hope is there where no churches exist? But there are millions of unevangelized people within the "reached" groups as well. We need intentional outreach in both categories. There is no question that this is a mighty challenge! Successful cross-cultural evangelism requires dedicated missionaries having proper training and support. The work is sacrificial, causing hardships for families—hardships often unrecognized and unappreciated by supporting churches. Many churches today have turned inward, choosing to support only local ministries. These worthy organizations need support, that is true, but there are billions who remain without hope, without salvation. They are calling, "Come help us!" When we answer this Macedonian call with a resounding, "Yes, we will!" we bring eternal salvation to modern Lydias and their families. May we be bold in our faith and generous in our support of reaching the world's unreached.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. God specially prepares servants to spread the Word (Acts 16:1-2)
2. As much as possible, it is best to avoid offending those you intend to evangelize (vs. 3)
3. Knowing the truth of God's grace strengthens the church (vss. 4-5)
4. God only rarely communicates through dreams, but He always tells His servants what they need to know (vss. 8-10)
5. God expects us to fulfill the mission He has given us, regardless of where it takes us (vss. 11-12)
6. When evangelizing, it is wise to start with people who have some knowledge of God (vss. 13-15)