

Acts 16:11-15

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Date: 19 March 2017

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[0 : 00] Please take out your copy of God's Word and turn to the book of Acts chapter 16. While you're getting there, as we open up the only infallible book that exists,! Let me speak a bit of a caution to you, which is probably not a caution so much for you as it may be for those that you know.

The Scriptures are the only infallible text we have in any book or any language. It's only true in that it's consistent with the Scriptures.

There are many books produced these days, Christian literature, that is not true and is not consistent with the book, the good book.

One such book is a book called The Shack. It sold 20 million copies, written by a man named William Paul Young.

And you all may know that a movie was just produced based on the book. And whether you think that The Shack is just a bit of allegory that tells a good story, speaks of some of the good quality about God, or whether you find it to be an altogether heretical departure from orthodoxy, some of the unintended consequence of people who claim to follow Jesus buying and going to see such material, is that it gives a guy like William Paul Young a voice in our culture.

[1 : 42] He recently released a book called Lies We Believe About God, where he says this of Christ's death. Who originated the cross?

If God did, then we worship a cosmic abuser, who in divine wisdom created a means to torture human beings in the most painful and abhorrent manner.

Frankly, it is often this very cruel and monstrous God that the atheist refuses to acknowledge or grant credibility in any sense. And rightly so. Better know God at all than this one.

And so, we must be careful, both about what we consume and about what others around us consume. Because a Christianity without the cross is a Christianity without Christ.

And there's no Christianity at all. Atheists reject the God of the Bible because the Spirit of God has not illuminated Him to them.

[2 : 48] Not because it's untrue. And so with that in mind, we come to our text today, which has nothing to do with the shack at all.

But it's the truth. And our text, as I said, is Acts chapter 16, verses 11 through 15. We're blessed, beloved, this morning to continue our study of Luke's second account of Jesus' ministry.

The book of Acts is a record of Jesus' ascended ministry through the agency of the Holy Spirit in the lives of His church. This morning, we find ourselves observing a portion of Paul's second missionary journey.

Last week, we saw that Paul and Silas and Timothy and now Luke were guided by the Spirit of Jesus. That's verse 7 of chapter 16.

Guided by the Spirit of Jesus in no uncertain terms to depart from Macedonia. Luke states in verse 10 of chapter 16 that immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

[4 : 02] And it is with this intention of theirs that we come to our text for today. Beloved, this is God's Word to us. It was written for His glory and our good.

We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. I begin reading in verse 11. So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.

We remained in this city some days. 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.

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 to what was said by Paul. 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.

[5 : 21] After Jesus' resurrection, before His ascension, He stated the following to the disciples in Matthew 28, verses 18-20. He said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. In similar form, Jesus stated in Acts 1, verse 8, You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. From these two texts, we can see that Jesus' promise of presence from Matthew 28-20, I am with you always, is fulfilled by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by power, which is the all authority in heaven and on earth that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 28-18.

And the aim of Jesus' presence and power in the lives of His disciples is the making of disciples by being His witnesses to all nations, to the end of the earth, and everywhere in between.

[6 : 45] So the scene in today's text is a picture of this work, the presence and the power of the Spirit of Jesus aimed at gospel mission.

That's why I will arrange our study of Acts 16, verses 11-15 on the following three points. And of course, I'll come back to these, but this will be the outline today.

Number one, the Spirit of Jesus' mission strategy. The Spirit of Jesus' mission strategy. Number two, the Spirit of Jesus' mission power.

And number three, the Spirit of Jesus' mission result. Well, before we consider the text arranged on those three points, let's understand the geography and the anthropology of the text.

That is to say, the where and the who of the text. And this is in verse 11 and verse 12. They set sail from Troas. They make a voyage to Samothrace, the following day to Neopolis, then to Philippi, which is a district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.

[7 : 55] I don't know if it helps you. I like knowing where in the world we are talking about. So I don't know if that map is still, hey, it's up there already. That's fantastic. I was told last week that this got a little bit confusing, and so I apologize if it is.

I don't have a laser pointer. I need to get one. If you'll note the region labeled here Asia, recall that the Spirit of God has moved this missionary company across Asia to not preach the gospel there. They're pressing on in this Macedonian call. And so from the port city of Troas up in the northwest corner there of Asia, from the port city of Troas, they sail to a little island right up in the now northeast corner of the Aegean Sea called Samothrace.

It's in weird gray all-cap letters there. Little island of Samothrace. They stay there overnight, likely to avoid the danger of sailing at nighttime.

We're not really sure. And the next day they sail on. Again, we're moving up in this northwestern fashion to Neopolis, Neopolis, and then just ten miles inland to Philippi.

[9 : 05] Now, Philippi was a leading city of the district of Macedonia, and it was a Roman colony. It was named after Philip II of Macedon, which was Alexander the Great's father.

It was the far eastern terminus, the end of the great Roman highway known as the Via Ignatia, or the Ignatian Highway.

So Philippi was an important hub for the spread of the gospel westward. And this is where they've been taken to, right? We see them speeding their way along to the city of Philippi.

And it's here in Philippi that they remained for some days and where we can learn something of the spirit of Jesus' mission strategy, which is our first point.

You can take that map down if you'd like, Natalie. Verse 13, we read that on the Sabbath day, they go outside the gate to the riverside where they supposed there was a place of prayer.

[10 : 10] And they sit down and they speak to the women who had come together. We have observed that it was Paul's habit to visit the local synagogue on the Sabbath in order to persuade the Jews that the promise of a Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus.

Now recall, there are still Jews scattered all over the place back from Babylonian captivity. Not every Jew had returned. Right now, we have descendants of those Jews living all over the place.

And in many cities, there was a synagogue. And it was a strategic place to go because these are people who worshipped the God of the Old Testament. Right? They knew about the promise of a coming Messiah.

So it was a wonderful starting place for Paul to preach the gospel. But we see here, in Philippi, there's a very small Jewish population and no synagogue.

We can know this because in order to establish a synagogue, a city had to have ten Jewish men who were the heads of households. That doesn't seem to exist here.

[11 : 15] In the city of Philippi, there is no synagogue. When a synagogue could not be established, a place of prayer would be formed outside, near a sea, or a river.

So when able to find a synagogue within the city, this is why we see Paul and his companions heading outside the gate to the riverside where we supposed there was a place of prayer.

This is why. They couldn't find a synagogue, so it made sense that they would go outside the gate along the river to find this place. of prayer. Now when speaking of the spirit of Jesus' mission strategy, let me be clear here, I do not mean to speak to his strategy in its entirety.

You can get very lost if you think this is the entirety of Jesus' mission strategy on earth. But simply to show you this, the spirit of Jesus exalts the person and work of Jesus Christ in unexpected places to unexpected people.

So this is part of his mission strategy. Unexpected places to unexpected people. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 27, God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

[12 : 32] God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. Paul and his companions shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with women.

Not only was the Jewish community too small for a synagogue to exist, but the only people in attendance at the place of prayer were women who in this day were considered second class citizens.

Let this text serve you if anybody ever makes a claim that Christianity is oppressive to women. Let this text serve you. Here we see Paul having seen a vision of a Macedonian man asking for help, sharing instead with anyone who would listen.

The Pharisees of Paul's day would have found this atrocious. The Pharisees of Paul's day would not teach women and in their prayers they would regularly thank God that they were neither Gentiles, slaves, or women.

Very oppressive. Now Paul never denied the uniqueness of God's good creation of the genders. In fact, he makes much defense of that in other texts.

[13 : 52] But stated in Galatians 3, verse 28, Paul says this, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female.

For you are all one in Christ Jesus. Paul affirms that while male and female are different in design, before God we are positionally the same.

in Christ we are Christians. Christianity, properly applied, lifts women up and maximizes their God-ordered femininity.

Beloved females,! I think feminism is never your servant. A God-ordered gender equality, God-ordered, found positionally in Christ before God the same but meant to serve different roles and be fulfilled in those roles is to your benefit.

So we see Paul and his companions sit down and speak to the women who had come together. But what do they say? What do they say? Luke's very brief account just says that they spoke to the women.

[15 : 13] As evidenced later in the text by Lydia's belief, they shared the good news of Jesus with them. This is the content of their conversation.

They spoke to the women of the Creator God and His good law, which they were likely aware of as they were gathering in a place of prayer.

They spoke to them of their failure to keep the law and the punishment due them accordingly. They spoke to them of Jesus' perfect keeping of that law and of His atoning sacrifice on the cross.

They spoke to them of Jesus' resurrection and His subsequent ascension and of their need for repentance and belief. They shared the good news of Jesus Christ in an unexpected place to unexpected people.

people. So we see, number one, the Spirit of Jesus' mission strategy, the gospel spoken in unexpected places to unexpected people.

[16 : 24] Now let's look at the second point, the Spirit of Jesus' mission power. The Spirit of Jesus' mission power. Verse 14, we see that 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 to what was said by Paul. Luke records for us the conversion of the first European Christian, a woman called Lydia who was from the city of Thyatira which was in the province of Lydia.

It's likely that she is called Lydia for that reason. She was probably the woman from Lydia is the way she would have been known in Philippi and so she was called Lydia probably for that reason unless her parents were clever.

I'm glad my parents didn't name me Gwinnett. She was a seller of purple goods and this is significant. Purple dye was made from the glands of a very particular shellfish or from the roots of a plant called the madder plant both which were very rare and therefore cloth that was purple was very expensive and as such purple garments were only worn by the extremely wealthy and this was likely a very lucrative business that Lydia was engaged in.

She was doing well for herself. Verse 15 tells us that she had a house large enough to host the missionary team. She invited them to host them and she prevailed upon them convinced them to come and likely the church that develops in Philippi met at her home which we get some hint of in verse 40 of the same chapter chapter 16 so Lydia was doing well for herself and was able to turn that into service of the church so the spirit of Jesus mission power is the power of conversion some of the greatest miracles recorded in the pages of scripture are the records of dead souls coming to life greater than the burning bush or the water of the Nile being turned into blood or the parting of the Red Sea or any other of the Exodus miracles greater than Jesus turning water into wine or calming the storm on the sea of

[18 : 59] Galilee greater than all of these is the acceptance of Jesus as the Christ repentance and faith is a work of God by his spirit God bends the wills of men like water in his hand Luke's record states the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul do not make the mistake of giving yourself too much credit in the saving of your soul Luke is careful here to emphasize that it was the work of the Lord to open her heart Paul said the following in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9 for by grace you have been saved through faith and this referring to faith is not your own doing it is the gift of

God not a result of works so that no one may boast and let me add my commentary to that so that no one may boast in themselves but they certainly can boast in God understand that the salvation of Lydia and your salvation is the work of God and it is proper for us to understand this to give him the proper praise that is due him to express this point to you in an artistic way let me share with you a poem by an anonymous author not by God just an author but it makes this point if you've been here a while you've heard me read this before oh long and dark the stairs I trod with trembling feet to find my God gaining a foothold bit by bit then slipping back and losing it never progressing striving still with weakening grasp and faltering will bleeding to climb to

God while he serenely smiled not noting me then came a certain time when I loosened my hold and fell thereby down to the lowest step my fall as if I had not climbed at all now when I lay despairing there listen a footfall on the stair on that same stair where I afraid faltered and fell and lay dismayed and low when hope had ceased!

to be my God came down the stairs to me and there is a picture of the gospel us helpless not drowning and being thrown a life preserver but dead at the bottom of the sea and Jesus dives in and he pulls our dead bodies to the surface and he breathes life into us and we believe in our text Luke states that the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul the Greek word for the phrase to pay attention carries a bit more weight than our English translations allow for it means to listen to but it also means to take heed of it means to pay attention in a way that spurns on obedience so the Lord opened her heart to take heed of what was said by

Paul so if you'll allow I think it's proper to see in this phrase to pay attention that we find the record of her conversion see her come to faith in Jesus and the Lord opening her heart to pay attention to take heed to what was being said by Paul to the gospel message that he was preaching the spirit of God converts us he causes us to believe it is in her subsequent obedience once she's converted it is in her subsequent obedience that we see thirdly the spirit of Jesus mission result in verse 15 we see and after she was baptized and her household as well she urged us saying if you judge me faithful to the

[23 : 44] Lord come to my house and stay and she prevailed upon us Luke records for us immediately that she was baptized and her household as well now the Greek word here translated baptized is the word baptizo!

It's not far away from the Greek word baptizo which is most often defined in extra biblical Greek writing as immerse or dunk repeatedly so Bible translators often go to extra biblical writing to understand how was the language of the day used they look at broader context to try to grasp what was meant by these Greek words which are complex but in many places that's what the word means to immerse or to dunk repeatedly I've seen one translator suggest that it means to hold under to drown baptizo it's a strong word in that regard so Lydia and her household which was probably with her were likely immersed in the river dunked under in the river now it is texts like this in Acts of which there are two others where we see household baptisms that are most often used by our brothers who are paedo baptists this is a fancy word paedo baptists are those who baptize infants we at

Christ family church are not paedo but rather credo baptists that's our fancy word we get to own which means that we only baptize people who have professed faith in Jesus Christ professed faith in Jesus Christ now I don't have time this morning or likely the energy for a large treatment of the topic of baptism but I do believe that it is important that you hold a conviction on the matter and understand why you hold said conviction it's a wonderful thing that we have the resource of Bible translation and study tools at our disposal I commend you to go and search the scriptures right believe what you believe and understand what you believe don't just do it because you know that I think that credo baptism is the proper way to go I also want you to understand that I do not want you to mistake my conviction on this subject or any other as a spirit of controversy

I know that when I hold beliefs sometimes I am passionate about the beliefs I hold it is never my intention to cause controversy in our community I know many pedo baptists who are faithful brothers and friends I have learned much from pedo baptist scholars I have a great commentary on the book of acts written by R.C.

Sproul which I had to pretty much entirely ignore for this section but I have learned much from his writing very much appreciate the contribution of pedo baptist scholars to Christianity and while I believe that my understanding my case my belief in credo baptism is biblical and that it's clear and nowhere expressly commands in the Bible that infant baptism should be practiced nor does it anywhere expressly forbid it so the point is we should be charitable we should be charitable I don't find it to be a particularly great thing but some people do is what I'm suggesting so let's hold our convictions and let's contend for the truth while appreciating the truths that we hold in common with our paedo-baptist brothers right more central truths that we hold in common particularly and probably especially

[27 : 58] Presbyterians of the conservative kind PCA if somebody says they're Presbyterian ask them PCA or PCUSA PCA Presbyterians are much like us in our beliefs we have a wonderful PCA congregation here in Dahlonga which I am very thankful exists and I'm glad to partner with them in this community for the gospel we can unite in salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone we can unite in the fact that baptism does not save you some hesitate to call them even denominations non-Christian denominations believe that baptism does save you not most of the people we know that practice pedo-baptism baptism does not save you but is rather a sign of God's promise particulars of which vary amongst us but all the same we agree that baptism is not salvific on your bulletin

I included as I like to do a Charles Spurgeon quote I'm very pleased to agree with Spurgeon concerning baptism but if I play that game the pedo-baptists get Whitfield and Baxter and Flavel and Edwards and Chalmers and Brainerd and a lot of others so I digress Spurgeon said this a man who knows that he is saved by believing in Christ does not when he is baptized lift his baptism into a saving ordinance that's the primary point of the quote in fact he is the very best protester against that mistake because he holds that he has no right to be baptized until he is saved the point is that Lydia who for obvious reasons was not circumcised had never been baptized and upon placing her faith in

Christ she was this is the point it's the driving point right the paedo Baptist argument that her household was baptized because of her faith does not hold water pun intended for me because it assumes that her household included infants doesn't it have to assume that we can just as easily and I believe more biblically assume that there were not infants and that those of her household

who were baptized did so as a result of faith in Jesus baptism has always been used as a sign of repentance John the baptizer come John the baptist baptism was exactly that Paul states this in Acts chapter 19 verse 4 he says John baptized with the baptism of repentance and Peter said in his sermon on the day of Pentecost in response to the question asked in

Acts chapter 2 verse 37 brothers what shall we do he had preached the gospel and the crowd cried out brothers what shall we do in Acts 2 and be baptized Jesus himself who was circumcised was also baptized in Matthew 3 15 he says thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness so Lydia believed and her household as well I would argue believed and they were baptized the spirit of Jesus worked obedience in them to be baptized so we can see the spirit of Jesus mission strategy gospel proclamation in unlikely places to unlikely people praise

God I find myself in that category we can see the spirit of Jesus mission power opening the hearts of Lydia and her family opening my heart to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and we can see the spirit of Jesus mission result obedience the immediate obedience of baptism to a response of faith so what does it all mean for us what is the application of the text for today first if you have repented and believed in Jesus Christ rejoice!

[33 : 14] of your sin say with Paul as he does in 1st Timothy chapter 1 verse 15 the saying is trustworthy and deserving a full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost do you believe that to be true of yourself you were a wretched wretched sinner Christ came to save you and be witnesses to that mercy that God saved you Paul goes on to say in verse 16 of 1st Timothy chapter 1 but I received mercy for this reason that in me as the foremost Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience!

as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life! This is a witness to Christ that our world needs beloved they do not need our judgment they need us to come to them and say me too but worse but God in his mercy showed me patience and he saved my soul and he'll do the same for you secondly if you have not repented and believed if you find in yourself an inclination to pay attention in any measure to the gospel this morning praise God he is at work within you and the aim of his work within you is repentance and believe so repent and believe that is the call if you're attuning at all to the great truth of the gospel who God is and who you are and this great chasm that exists between you and the solution to that separation found in the personal work of Jesus Christ turn from your sins! Repentance confess it before him turn from it and believe in the satisfactory substitutionary atoning sacrifice of Christ the cross great high point of Jesus our God's expression of love to the world turn from your sin to Christ thirdly if you have repented and believed and have not been baptized as a believer do so it's a matter of obedience let's pray together