

Acts

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[0 : 0 0] On the health of God, direct you to the lesson, chapter 16 in the Acts of the Apostles, reading verses 9 and 10, the 9th and 10th verses of the 16th chapter in the Acts.

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. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, and assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

In this treatise, the Acts of the Apostles, written by St. Luke, he continues what he has set forth in the gospel according to St. Luke.

There we have narrated all that Jesus began both to do and to teach. And here this is continued concerning what Jesus did and taught by his blessed spirit that he had given upon his enthronement to glory.

And so, I would briefly make this observation, dear friends, as we begin. You will find in the gospels, the Son of God revealing and exalting the Father.

[2 : 0 8] And in this book of the Acts, you will find the Spirit of God revealing and exalting the Son of God.

And so, there is very much throughout the whole of the Holy Spirit of the Holy Spirit of God that commenced when he was so mightily poured forth at the day of the Pentecost.

and of course it is a most highly interesting chapter to us, this one, for a specific reason and I wonder whether this has already occurred to your minds.

Namely this, we have here in this chapter an account of how the Gospel was turned into and brought first into Europe so that it was getting very much closer to the British Isles and I do think that is a highly remarkable and wonderful and interesting thing for us here on this seventh day, Saturday in Abingdon to consider that this once pagan island, according to the mercy and goodness of our God he sent the Holy Gospel into this land and here in this chapter is an account of how it came into Europe and Lydia was the first convert.

Well now, I think it is highly desirable that we should consider these blessed details because look how great the harvest is now.

[4 : 2 2] When you consider that from such a small beginning the Lord has called so many thousands of souls in these islands and because he had this purpose he has made known to us the wonderful gift of his in the ordinance of the ministry because it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to call them that belief and so we believe that God will make known his blessing I do not personally feel despondent about the future I feel that God has given indication in his blessed word that he is going to revive Zion and it is for this reason that he will favor her when the set time is come and he will answer the prayers of his dear praying people and all the while he is anointing ministers to preach the gospel it shows that there will be a sphere of usefulness for them in the calling of his dear elect well now

I am thankful to be with you in this ancient place of Abingdon today and of course our main concern is to observe the work of the Holy Spirit and so this has occurred to my mind that it might be a good basis for our meditation this afternoon and what is it that we see here well let us lead a little into the subject I think it is a very blessed thing to notice in the beginning that when Paul came to Derby and Lystra the very place where he was stoned and met with such violent persecution this is the very place where he reached the richest fruit or some of the richest fruit of his ministry namely in the case of Timotheus and what a wonderful thing it is to observe that that wherever there is true spiritual labour that the Lord has given us to know that this cannot be without profit and that you remember the word that he has left his church which relates to the power of his resurrection therefore my beloved brethren be ye steadfast unknowable always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord let me give this very simple word to you it's impossible for spiritual labour to be in vain

I sometimes hear prayers that are well-meaning and the sentence concerning the minister may be this Lord never let thy servant labour in vain it's impossible my friends impossible no spiritual labour is rapid it cannot be in vain well now just look at this then he returns to the very place where he was stoned and they thought he was dead they drew him out of the city and here he reaped this precious fruit because Timothy was more dear to him than any other and then I want to notice this point as we go along it is really if we take a summary of this section

I think we shall quote this text as many as are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God if we are indwelt by the Holy Ghost if our bodies are the temple of the spirit of God we shall be led by the spirit of God and that is of course of tremendous importance to the Lord's dear people it will be your prayer to be led by the spirit of God not to be moved by any other influence by the flesh or by the powers of darkness but to be led by the spirit of God and you will notice in this matter that something very remarkable took place namely you see Paul had with him

Timothy and then when we come into our text verse 10 you'll notice that the word changes Luke says we which means that he joined them so there was a trio there was Paul and Demotheus and Luke too they were together the three we he said and I may drop a word on that later in this discourse God willing but here is the remarkable thing there were doors closed first of all what do we read when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia

[11 : 06] Asia then was a closed door I think of course that this may be very trying and distressing and desolating to a minister or a child of God to find a door closed but my friend wait patiently for him wait at his feet he will open a door so the door into Asia was closed and then after they would come to Nicaea they essayed to go into Bithynia which word essayed is very interesting it means this to make a trial you're not clear in your mind you're not blessed with great light but you make a trial it is as though you put one foot forward to see if the Lord will prosper your way or whether he will show you that this is not the way they essayed but what happened the spirit suffered them

I wonder if I speak here a personal word whether there are any in this congregation who may be in the experience of a closed door or doors now I would not have you really over distressed about but I can tell you why and you see from this very day whether this is not true God is going to open another door for you my friend oh yes he is you may not know in what location of this land but there is going to be another door open for you so this is a good word for you wait patiently at his dear feet and wait at the posts of his door and you will see him mercifully make known his way to you so it is according to the sovereignty of God that he does close doors you know there is this very simple sort of elementary and rustic utterance that I have sometimes made to my own slot that I think I might reiterate and it is this if you come to a closed door you mustn't try to open it but you cannot but when

God makes his way plain he sets before his people an open door you haven't got to open it yourself he opens the door never endeavour to force a door that is closed and it is amazing how the Lord works in the hearts of his dear people to make them willing in the day of his power well now what purpose had the Lord for this holy apostle of his poor Paul could not be idle Paul had tremendous energy that grace gave him to serve the Lord and he sought to use this for the glory of his God and what was the issue there in an extremely supernatural and remarkable manner did the

Lord make known his pleasure and purpose and will to our own apostle Paul and it was by a vision appearing to him in the night I do not know whether any of you people would volunteer a statement to say that the Lord has appeared to you in the form of a vision I think I could perhaps embark a little on that I believe possibly twice in my life the Lord has used that method of making known to me his purpose it seems to me that we may think of it as the suspension of mortal powers and the activating and sensitizing of spiritual powers that there should be some contact between

God and those spiritual powers that are activated and sensitized so that something is made doubly clear to you whilst all nature sleeps I think that may be some definition of it but in any case a vision means the unfolding just the same as revelation the unfolding of something clearly plainly that earth's while was hidden you didn't know anything about it you had no inkling of it and one day this secret thing to you is made clear to you open to you discovered to you it's something that God has decreed it is his eternal purpose it is something that is settled in heaven and you didn't know anything about it until he discovered it to you and laid it out in front of your astonished sight revelation a vision a method of communication from God in heaven to you on the earth now my friends

[18 : 39] I shall run over possibly this one thing everything that God has decreed in heaven concerning his dear people has to be revealed to them or discovered to them how do you know what God has settled in heaven for you I look on it this way that God is the great architect and he has a master plan and it all settles and there's every detail settled down to the finest detail well how do we know what these things are until they're revealed to us so it's a wonderful thing what happened here was this in the night something took place that altered the whole course of the work and ministry and usefulness of the apostle he must go a distance

I should think of something like 300 miles into Macedonia the northern part of Greece to minister there and to plant a church there and a church that was most fruitful and a church that was a source of the greatest joy and comfort to him and that always ministered to him wonderful thing and it all hinged providentially in his life upon that one opening of revelation to him in the night and it must have been so powerful and so clear because there was not a scrap of any doubt about it in his mind assuredly gathering you see an assurance concerning this matter that into Macedonia they must go well now look at this thing then which I would call over to you everything that God has decreed concerning his dear servants and people he makes known to them by a promise or promises or by the light of his truth by revelation by a vision by a blessed persuasion he discovers it to them in their hearts and then the thing discovered to them in their hearts which at first is a secret who knows it but the one to whom it is revealed and yet when it concerns a pastoring of people or two of the

Lord's people it may be revealed to two people simultaneously or to a number of people in the same period of time the thing is revealed to them well now as it's revealed to us there will be an exercise of soul concerning it you'll spread it before the Lord you'll pray about it you'll ask for confirmation you'll want to see the Lord appearing for you and then the thing that was decreed and is revealed and is promised is fulfilled and the thing fulfilled is fruitful and the praise redounds to God and so it is a complete cycle of divine care and mercy and goodness you'll see well now dear friends let us examine this and probably our friends here and our brother will know how this has applied to them in what is celebrated this day in Thanksgiving there stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him he must have seen in this vision a man a praying man a man who was very earnest and full of desire and longing a man who was very hungry a man who was thirsting and I think he saw a man who knew the truth of this my friends

I will not let thee go except thou bless me I think he saw a man who knew that who's been saying that to his God and it's not an insipid lame half-hearted sort of thing that Paul heard there was a man of Macedonia there in dead earnest and living earnest and he was crying and he said come over of course it is significant come over because of what I have mentioned to you I have not measured the distance exactly but I could think it was something like two to three hundred miles he's saying now come over into

Macedonia and help us well this was what am I going to say about it I have stepped before thee an open door no man can shut it you know I'm going to pause here for a moment and say this I believe I've got someone here maybe more than one who has seen doors closed and you're going and soon probably to see a door open and to me it's like speaking a word of prophecy to you you're going to hear the man of Macedonia you're not going of course to the north of Greece I would be surprised if you did but never mind go where

[25 : 51] God called you I don't mind where it is he said to them go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature go where God sends you that's the point I'm not interested so much in the geography of it there's the world the world is our parish of course it is to preach the gospel it's not limited to a few square miles in one land the world is our parish this is true isn't it so go where God sends you if you go where God sends you he'll prosper you and he sets before them an open door so you can be now waiting to see how God is opening up his way before you when I wanted well on this for a few moments

I said here is then the leading of the spirit of God why does he lead us because we are so ignorant and so blind and so unworthy and so unskilled that we don't know the way unless he leads us could any man be left to himself could you say oh I can guide my way of course you cannot who knows the right way unless the Lord guides us in any case the way is not the way the flesh wants you wouldn't go in God's way were it left to you God's way is usually a difficult one it is a way that the flesh does not choose so the spirit of God kindly leads and of course in the leading does many things not only shows the way but makes you willing to walk in it and gives you grace to enable you to fulfill the will of

God in it my grace is sufficient for thee I was only thinking a few days ago how wonderfully signposted this country is and I think most of the civilized lands of the world now you only go just a few hundred yards as another signpost and I was thinking in connection with that of course of the six cities of refuge in the holy land and how they were all so clearly signposted so that any poor soul that was fleeing who had unwittingly shed blood knew the way could see the way well now my friends the Lord shows us the way and if we're his ministers we shall show you the way to heaven the gospel points to heaven and shows the road now what about this leading well I'm going to mention three things to you about the leading of the spirit of

God and the first is this that he leads his servants and his people by the holy light the diffusion of heavenly light of his eternal truth to guide you by his own word where is there a gracious person who dare take a step without the word of the Lord I admire that person who says I cannot give a decision I must wait upon the Lord I want a word from him and probably you'll desire to have more than one word you may desire that there shall be a double or treble confirmation but you cannot know you cannot see the way without the light of his eternal truth now it has been given in testimony by our brother and this church at

Abingdon concerning this light of his truth that they believe this light has led them in this important matter I have heard the testimony myself now what else shall I name to you it is the light of his eternal truth that will lead you and then it is the internal powerful sweet blessed influence and motions of the Holy Spirit the Spirit of God well been you and as I have already mentioned to you makes you willing you see you know from the revelation of the Lord's will in the Bible he says now nothing is acceptable unless it's done willingly and even the force of the revelation of the light of nature would reveal the truth of that to you could you accept anything or feel that it was at all valuable if a person did that for you unwillingly of course not but if it's done willingly it's something that does you good it has value in it now the

[31 : 58] Spirit of God revealing the way makes you willing willingness obliterates causes to flow down every sort of mountain every obstacle every hindrance the way is fine to you you're willing you follow your blessed Lord he was willing to come willing to suffer willing to die his death was voluntary all this willingness fear threats so the sweet influence of this blessed Spirit makes you willing you're saved and then there's another thing in this divine reading what is it these three things synchronize the third thing is the open door of his holy providence you see number three are one the word of our

God the light of his truth his word for it the Spirit's influence in your soul to constrain you to equip you to qualify you for this task and the door that is open open by God in his holy superintendence of all things this is how he leads now here a man of Macedonia of course the thing was there was that in this place in Macedonia there was much prayer it was a legal meeting place for them that is they were legally entitled to meet there but there was no synagogue there and the thing was this there was a pouring out of the

Spirit of God upon them in prayer and this always precedes God's blessings and gifts God pours upon you the Spirit of united prayer wrestling prevailing prayer you'll see an answer blessed answer there was much prayer that there was no ordinance of the ministry they needed something how often these days do we look around and feel this they are a sheep without a shepherd seems sad souls sheep no shepherd if you could wander around on the downs and see the sheep and you came to many sheep and there was no shepherd you would say I pity the poor sheep and it is so with us now in these days oh how they need something they need a shepherd so that the scattered bloc should be collected and the

Lord opened wide to them the gospel door well they knew their need of this ministry so this man made an appeal now I think I should stop here for a moment and say this to you do the people pray for God's gifts precious gifts of pastors according to his power to feed with knowledge and understanding do the people pray for that is that in their heart to seek him for or are they preferring beaten craft pardon that expression I'm not suggesting that godly deacons here are left in that but it is something that has been uttered and it is true in some cases there are some deacons who don't want to go away and think

I'm making any personal reference I'm not I've come to love and highly esteem many good deacons but I'm at the same time I'm disposed to think that there are those who love terror and so they would rather continue as they are than have a pastor well what a mercy it is when we see god's order and a desire that it should be so that this gift should be this so so this man pleaded he said now come I think you know that there are some of you here this afternoon who may be very much wondering as to where god will place you he has a place and at the same time if I might drop just a word there there may be some of you who are deeply exercised concerning a pastor added yes you know not the man you don't know who this man is and I can give you a good prayer of a framework and it's this don't say to the lord send us that man and insist on this man that ask him to send the man of his choice that's it say lord thou didst know prepare us a man of thine own heart to be our past to feed us with knowledge and understanding so come over into

[39 : 03] Macedonia and help her now there's a very beautiful part to this he says you know help us we need help it seems to me that he would touch the sympathetic loving heart of the man that has a pastor's heart help her of course you would a pastor has a father's heart and that means to say he's got a very loving and sympathetic and feeling heart so if you can get hold of that my friend by divine appointment I believe the man is coming over to Macedonia to help you if you can get hold of his heart in the gospel if you can win his heart as it were because it's love isn't it it is really a conjugal matter as between the pastor and people so he can win his heart give one him and that of course is in the

Lord help us we're a few poor sheep now come and help us he now what is this response I'm interested in responses after he had seen the vision he had mark you then we they were united and that was one thing I wanted just to name to you I think it is so blessed to see this Paul Demotius his own son in the faith and Luke are that one in the Lord that one in this gospel I do love that unity of the spirit and the bond of spirit this is something that we need to pray for and to thank God as we enjoy it you cannot produce it but God can give it to you

I must not allow myself to say too much that in the providence of God in the concerns of one little flock in Sussex not of course my own mother church but one little place the Lord has brought three of us three ministers into this unity in a most blessed way that is to say in caring for that little tiny flock the three of us are absolutely one and it is a beautiful thing we've never had the slightest word of lack of harmony never a thought never a word never a deed that has broken into that sweet unity is a prayer and to me it's a most blissful thing

I cannot tell you how I have these ladies blessed it is so they were won oh that the Lord would grant this blessing in his church may this prayer be abundantly answered each to each unite end dear come and spread thy banner here so that the trials and the sorrows and the tribulations and the joys only tend to make the union closer in the Lord so after we had seen he had seen the vision immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia it must have been such a settled thing so powerful so overwhelming there was not to be any delay at all but immediately we endeavoured that is endeavoured means every power concentrated to fulfil this to obey to do the will of God immediately we instead to go into

Macedonia with an assurance what was it that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them now this is my hope concerning our brother and this people that it may be a blessed parallel to the account before us so that pastor and people may be united and that there may be a measure of the same fruitfulness as attended the holy apostle Paul's ministry in Macedonia you you you see my friends if I drop a word to you on confidence because it's here assuredly gathering there was a confidence there in the apostle soul do you know what confidence means spiritual confidence it means first of all to have a ground of trust and that ground of trust is the

[45 : 10] Lord and his blessed word and then it means to have a firm trust in him firmly trust him and his word and then it means an assurance of favor and blessing that you will be helped and blessed and strengthened and brought to you you have an assurance on it now may the Lord give this confidence to his dear servant and to us and I will just come as we close to take just a glance at the outcome of all this and I think first of all you know that when the apostle came as he was guided without the city to this riverside and he spake unto these dear women

I think he must have felt that he and I were lying down in the green park and this was beside the water the choir it was paid swayed paid and the rich blessing of God attended his ministry and this first convert in Europe Lydia was baptized and her household whose heart the Lord opened to attend unto the trees spoken by Paul but my friends this step was confirmed by blessing by holy peace and it was confirmed in suffering too it was confirmed in the furnace as well as lying in the green pasture and a step that is taken in the fear of

God is confirmed those ways he'll be with you in blessing in peace in cancer and he'll be with you in the furnace of affliction and trial you know the issue of casting into prison their backs like a cloud field being scourged I wonder how their poor bodies looked after the scourge the flowers that made long their furrows but into the inner prison they go with their feet fast in the stock end the Lord was with them this was God's why he had led them there and he was with them there and they could cry and sing praises at midnight the

Lord was with them God is with us in this way his why and see how remarkable it was the prisoners heard this and the Lord sent a great earthquake and here the apostle and his co-laborers are still reaping through assuredly gathering that the Lord had sent us for to preach the gospel unto this the stout jailer the type of man appointed to be a jailer you can almost see him where your powerful physique and thou is trembling and God helps all the priests in and he and his house thou blessed thou that tithe and so the church glorified his form now see how

God is with his servants in this path of divine direction God well beloved friends it's a great mercy to have a little counterpart to this in our own souls to look back and see how God has led us in September of 1936 I was in agony of soul the pastor Dicker was dying and I knew it I was on my way to Brighton by train changed the tollgate junction went to the end of the platform and sat down and if ever my soul was in agony and distress it was that midday as I sat down on that seat

[51 : 08] God came with the church at the dicker and just put it right into my heart and and it was done in a moment I was the pastor from that moment and I had it even free so I know what I'm speaking about that was done that was done in the twinkling of an eye and that was done with such assurance power that I never doubted it I couldn't doubt it it was impossible to doubt it on the next morning the dear man died I was with him that was

Wednesday the next day Thursday we met for prayer and in deep sorrow when I stood in prayer in my own chapel the spirit anointed I never told anyone that they saw us they knew I waited from that evening until December that was three months when it came to December that is the day after Christmas day my soul was in paradise I couldn't go through the day and at the church meeting the matter was nine and the Lord commenced the day now my friend the path that

God calls you to is a blessed path and it's following your blessed Lord and he'll honour you and prosper you in it he'll have sorrows and trials and afflictions and deaths but he'll be with you and each seeming loss will improve your guidance and each trouble will comfort him and the things that seem sometimes to be against you are for you he'll be with you my friend this is the path that God has led you in stone so fear not to go over into Macedonia and help them because you may assuredly gather that the Lord has called you to preach the gospel unto them because hundred and from you and for themetros to tackling