

**Paul's Second Missionary Journey Pt. 2**  
**The Conversion of Lydia**  
**Acts 16:11-15**

**15:36 – 18:22** chronicles additional gospel advance. The expectation of continuing the Gentile mission within the confines of Asia Minor was interrupted by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle was redirected into Macedonia and Achaia, regions of southeastern Europe. The journey spans the years of around **49** to **52**.

1. **The Travel Narrative. Vv. 11-12.** The initial beachhead in Europe has all the markings of a divine appointment.
  - a. **It is a work of providence. V. 11.** Providence is God's wise administration of the world to accomplish His kingdom agenda. Divine concurrence is God's divine power working through the secondary powers according to their pre-established means. Here:
    - i. **A vision launches the endeavor. Vv. 9-10.**
    - ii. **Divine power cooperates with nation forces to speed the passage. Vv. 11-12.** The expression lit. "*ran a straight course*" is a nautical expression, the wind was at their back<sup>1</sup>.
  - b. **The road to Philippi. Vv. 11-12.** Places mentioned:
    - i. **Samothrace.** Samothrace was a mountainous island rising to 5000 feet- a prominent landmark. It was seat of a widely patronized ancient mystery cult, the worship of Cabiri.
    - ii. **Neapolis.** Neapolis, is modern Kavalla, was on the mainland. It was a port of Philippi, which lay some 10 miles inland. Here the great Egnatian

Way, a Roman road linking the Adriatic with the Aegean reached its eastern terminus<sup>2</sup>.

- iii. **Philippi<sup>3</sup>.** Was an ancient town, renamed in 356 B.C. by Phillip of Macedon after himself. As Rome expanded it became a Roman possession in 167 B.C. Its greatest claim to fame was that it was where Mark Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius in the second Roman civil war in 42 B.C. As a result it was awarded the status of a Roman colony that reported directly to the Emperor. Soldiers retired there and the citizens were tax exempt.

2. **The Significance of Philippi.** Kent Hughes said, "Rome did not know it, but the flag of Christianity was unfurled in the Empire that day, and the reigning Christ was about to win many to himself. The significance:
  - a. **For the Church. J. B. Lightfoot. ([April 13, 1828](#) – [December 21, 1889](#))** was an [English theologian](#) and [Bishop of Durham](#), "The arrival of Paul in the metropolis marks a new and important epoch in the history of the Christian Church. Hitherto he had come in contact with Roman institutions modified by local circumstances and administered by subordinate officers in the outlying provinces of the Empire. Now he was in the very centre and focus of Roman influence; and from this time forward neither the policy of the government nor the character of the reigning prince was altogether a matter of indifference to the welfare of Christianity. The change of the scene had brought with it a change of the mutual relations between the Gospel and the Empire. They were now occupying the same ground, and a collision was inevitable.

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<sup>1</sup> The 156 mile journey took only two days. The return voyage required five days to complete. [Cf. 20:6](#).

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<sup>2</sup> The Roman's built the road across Macedonia after the region was made a province in 146 B.C. Bruce, p. 309

<sup>3</sup> It is described as being of the 'first district' of the four districts Macedonia was divided into. It is also a "Roman colony" the only one expressly called so.

- b. **For Rome. Will Durant.** “There is no greater drama in human record than the sight of a few Christians, scorned or oppressed by a succession of emperors, bearing all trials with a fierce tenacity, multiplying quietly, building order while their enemies generated chaos, fighting the sword with the word, brutality with hope, and at last defeating the strongest state that history has known. Caesar and Christ had met in the arena, and Christ had won.”<sup>5</sup>
- c. **For the world. G. Campbell Morgan.** “How little the world knows of the Divine movements. Rome had small idea that day, that the van of the army of its ultimate Conqueror had taken possession of one of its frontal defenses. On the day when Paul hurried from Neapolis, over the eight miles up to Philippi- and came into the city and made arrangements for his own lodging... the flag was planted in a frontier colony of Rome, which eventually was to make necessary the lowering of her flag, and the change of the world’s history.”
3. **The inauspicious beginning. V. 13.** The absence of record of Paul’s custom of beginning in the synagogue argues the presence of very few Jews. Ten men were required to constitute a synagogue and no amount of women could compensate for one short the number. The river<sup>4</sup> was the place devout Jews met under such circumstances. It permitted them to gather in an undefiled place and also to engage in the purification rites.
4. **The First rumblings of the Gospel’s power in Rome. Vv. 14 -15.** One particular woman is singled out.
- a. **The first recorded convert in Europe. Vv. 14-15.** Her importance is highlighted by the rich description afforded her. She is:
- i. **V. 14a. Lydia.** Her name is Lydia, “The Lydian woman.” Thyatira was in the territory of the ancient kingdom of Lydia. The people there were famous for their skill in working with purple dye, extracted from the juice of the madder root. She had evidently come to Philippi as a trader<sup>5</sup>. She probably learned of Yahweh in her homeland and continued to worship in Philippi.
- ii. **V. 14b. The Regenerative work of the Spirit. “The Lord opened her heart...”** describes the Spirit’s work of regeneration. What is emphasized is the power, not of Paul, but of the Lord working through His word. This:
1. Imparts an importance lesson about the nature of kingdom work- one that would stand them well. It is always the Lord working sovereignly by His Spirit through His word. **Cf. Ro. 1:16-17; Jas. 1:18; 1Thess. 1:4; 2Thess. 2:13.**
  2. Insures that the glory goes to God and not man. The gospel’s expansion into Europe was an act of pure sovereign grace from beginning to end.
- iii. **V. 15.** Christ establishes His church on Europe’s shore. It is a testimony to:
1. The transforming power of the gospel. It is the description of the new life in action through **(1)** household religion and **(2)** hospitality. **Cf. Ro. 12:13; 1Tim. 3:2.**
  2. The gospel Head quarters in the city. In her home was now a picture of the new wine of the kingdom. Jew and Gentile

<sup>4</sup> The banks of the River Gangites was the place.

<sup>5</sup> Women in Macedonia were noted for their independence. Under Roman law women with three children and freedwomen with four children were able to undertake legal transactions on their own initiative.

living, loving, laboring together as the  
New Humanity in Christ.