

## Bi134 Acts

### *Lesson Bi134-29 The Spirit Guides*

Jesus has commanded us to take the gospel to the whole world. But the world is big! Many people in many places need to hear about Christ. To which place should we go first? Paul and Silas faced that same dilemma during Paul's second missionary journey. However, the Spirit of God directed them to where he wanted them to go. He will do the same for us today.

Leaving their home base of Antioch, Paul and Silas traveled northward through Syria. They then turned westward into Cilicia, Paul's home country. From there they again headed north into southern Galatia. Everywhere they found a local church; they spent time teaching and encouraging the disciples there.

Arriving in Galatia, they visited the Christians in Derbe and Lystra. There they found a young disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish believer and his father was a Greek. Everyone in the region had good things to say about him. Paul noticed his high character and strong commitment to Christ, so he asked him to join their missionary team. When Paul discovered that his being of mixed race troubled some of the local Jews, he arranged for Timothy to be circumcised.

The apostles then moved from town to town teaching believers and sharing the instructions contained in the letter from the Jerusalem Council. The churches were strengthened and continued to grow in numbers daily.

After this, Paul and his missionary team decided to proceed eastward into Asia Minor. The Holy Spirit, however, prevented them. So they headed out in a northwesterly direction through Phrygia and Galatia.

Coming to the border of Mysia they decided to head due north into the province of Bithynia. Again, the Spirit of Jesus prevented them and again they adjusted their course. They journeyed to Troas, a seaport on the banks of the Aegean Sea. During the night, Paul was given a vision. In the vision he saw a man from Macedonia. The man was standing and pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." When Paul told his vision to his colleagues, everyone concluded that God was directing them to go there and declare the message of Christ. They immediately obeyed and sailed for Macedonia (Acts 16:1-10).

In Scripture, the Holy Spirit is called by many names. For example, he is referred to as the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth, and the Counselor. Each name tells us something about his character and work. In today's story, the Holy Spirit is called the '*Spirit of Jesus*'. This is because he was acting in Jesus' place guiding the missionaries to do the work he had commissioned them to do. In their letters Paul calls him the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:19) and Peter refers to him as the Spirit of Christ (1Pet 1:11).

Another interesting thing happens in this passage. When referring to Paul and his missionary band, Luke begins to use the word '*we*' in place of the word '*they*,' which he has

been using up to this point. This tells us that in Troas Luke joined Paul's missionary team. The team now consists of Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke. Luke will accompany Paul as far as Philippi, where he will remain behind. Later in Acts, Paul will find Luke again in Troas. There Luke will rejoin Paul and stay with him through the remainder of the book. This knowledge gives us great confidence in what Luke tells us in the book of Acts. We know that he was an eyewitness to many of its events.

From the story of how the Spirit directed Paul and his team to Macedonia, we learn two important ministry lessons.

First, we learn the value of ministering in teams. Paul seldom traveled alone. He almost always took people with him to do ministry. He did this for at least two reasons. First, his companions could help him fulfill the calling God had placed on his life. Second, he was able to mentor them in how to be effective missionaries. One important job of any Christian pastor or leader is to build a good team. These people will help him or her to do their job more efficiently. They will be able to mentor them in the work of the Lord.

Paul was very careful about whom he invited to join his team. He always chose people of high character, deep spirituality, and strong commitment to the work of missions. We see this in his choosing Silas, Timothy, and Luke to join him in the mission. No doubt he, like Jesus, also sought the Spirit's guidance in making his choices. We, too, must choose our team members wisely.

The second lesson we learn from today's story is the necessity of divine guidance in evangelistic and missionary work. In the story, we again see the Holy Spirit acting as Superintendent of the Harvest. Throughout Acts, he is the one who directs the mission, telling the missionaries where to go and what to do. We have previously seen him directing Philip into Gaza to talk to the Ethiopian nobleman. He sent Peter to Caesarea to preach to the household of Cornelius. Now, in today's story, Luke gives us a detailed account of how the Spirit directed Paul to go into Europe to proclaim the gospel. Once the missionary team determined that the vision was from God, they immediately obeyed and sailed for Macedonia.

In like manner, when we are doing the Lord's work, we should trust the Holy Spirit to guide us. This guidance may come in various ways, including dreams, visions, angelic appearances, and providential circumstances. However, the most usual way God leads us is by speaking directly to our spirits by his Spirit. To experience such guidance it is essential that we be prayerful and remain full of the Holy Spirit. We should know that what the Lord speaks to us by his Spirit will always be in harmony with his written word, the Bible. Then, when the Spirit speaks, we must be quick to obey his voice.

This lesson is **important** because in it we learn the value of ministering in teams. We also learn the necessity of hearing and obeying the voice of the Spirit.

The **main truth** we learn from this lesson is that if we will remain prayerful and full of the Holy Spirit, he will direct us in our evangelistic and missions work.

Let's review some important truths we have learned from this lesson.

1. Why did Paul and his missionary team go to Macedonia to preach the gospel?
  - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that Paul and his team went into Macedonia to preach the gospel because they were guided by the Holy Spirit, you answered correctly.
  
2. From what we have learned in this lesson, how can we best carry out the work of missions?
  - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the work of missions is best carried out by teams of committed Spirit-filled disciples, you are right.
  
3. In this lesson what have we learned about how the Holy Spirit helps us in the work of evangelism and missions?
  - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the Holy Spirit helps us in the work of evangelism and missions by showing us where to go and what to do, you are correct.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this lesson two or three times until you can tell others the story of how the Holy Spirit led Paul and his missionary team into Macedonia. You should also be able to explain two lessons that we learned from this story. Then, begin to pray and ask the Lord to help you build a committed, Spirit-filled evangelistic team to reach the lost in your community.