

Sermon 3-21-18 God's Will and My Response Acts 16:6-15

Dear Dependent on the Lord:

Paul and Lydia were 2 very different people, yet they shared something in common with each other and with us: God is in charge...

- Of our life
- Of our salvation

But consider how different the Apostle Paul was from the woman named Lydia in Acts 16.

Paul was...

- Born a Jew
- A Pharisee trained in the Old Testament Scriptures
- A Roman citizen
- Converted by Jesus on the road to Damascus
- God's chosen messenger to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles.

On the other hand, Lydia...

- Came from the city of Thyatira in present-day Turkey
- Was a slave who gained her freedom
- Was a businesswoman
- Was head of her household
- Was a widow
- Was a God-fearer – a non-Jewish believer in the God of the O.T.

Paul and Lydia came from worlds apart and yet they share something in common.

Neither Paul nor Lydia were in control of their lives.

Paul in Acts 16...

- Wants to go to the Roman province of Asia where Lydia originally lived in Thyatira
- The Spirit of Jesus would not let him go there for some reason
- Paul wants to go to Bithynia but the Spirit said no
- Instead Paul ends up here in Philippi against his own travel plan
- He can't do what he wants
- He is redirected to Philippi where he finds a group of women down by the river in prayer and worship
- Paul would always go to the Synagogue upon arriving in a new town to preach Christ crucified but Philippi had no Synagogue
- So he finds a group of women who are worshiping the God of the Old Testament down by the river.

Lydia was part of this group. She most likely had been a slave before she was given her freedom. She was taken from her home of Thyatira and brought to Philippi which certainly wasn't part of her agenda.

Now she finds herself a widow in Philippi and running a business of providing purple clothing. Lydia sold purple fabric and purple dye for purple garments which was worn by the wealthy and royalty. She apparently was profitable to be able to have a house large enough for Paul's missionary team in Philippi to use as a base of operations.

Both Paul and Lydia are on a journey of faith and dependence upon God.

- Paul is not where he wanted to be originally for his mission work
- Lydia is not where she wanted to be most likely being brought to Philippi when she was still a slave before she was given her freedom

Yet, both Paul and Lydia meet because God was in charge of their lives.

Was Paul and Lydia's meeting a complete coincidence, a chance meeting, a random event? No way!

God's ways are not our ways - Isaiah 55:8

Who is in charge of this meeting between Paul and Lydia?

The Lord directs our daily lives.

James 4:15 "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.

The Spirit of Jesus led Paul to Philippi a place he had not intended to go.

Lydia ended up in Philippi a place that was not on her agenda, too.

But it was part of God's plan for both Paul and Lydia.

Acts 16:13-14 Paul on the Sabbath day found a group of women who had gathered by the river outside the city and he began speaking to them about the Lord. Lydia one of the women responded to Paul's message as the Lord opened her heart to believe in the Gospel.

"God determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him...reach out for him and find him..." Acts 17:26f

Both Paul and Lydia are actively engaged in the journey of faith by God's will.

- God determines when we will live
- God determines where we will live
- God determines how we will come to Him

Later on in Acts 16 Paul is stripped, beaten and thrown into prison but God was still in control of Paul's life and mission.

God opened Lydia's heart to respond to the Gospel. Romans 9:16

Lydia receives God's Word...

- She is baptized
- Her whole household is baptized
- She provides her home as the headquarters for Paul's mission work

Lydia tells Paul and his fellow missionaries: "You have to come to my house and stay; my house will now become the base of operations for the church here in Philippi"

God is in control...

- Of Paul's life
- Of Lydia's life
- Of our lives

We are not in control of our own lives. God is in control of...

- Our lives
- Our salvation
- Our mission
- Our journey of faith

Luther said: "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him." I Corinthians 12:3; Ephesians 2:8-9

We are...

- Not in charge of our life

- Not in charge of our own salvation
- Not in charge of our own spiritual development

For it is God who works in us to do His will and in Him we live and move and have our being. Acts 17:28

Like Lydia, like Paul we have been caught up and swept away by the baptismal waters. We are riding on the back of a mighty current the river of God is taking us exactly where God wants us to be.

Luther said: “That I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.”

We are on a great adventure. God’s river is taking us right where God wants us to go. Ephesians 2:10 We are God’s workmanship.

- Like Paul
- Like Lydia
- We are on the journey God marked out for us.