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Sermon Study on Acts 16, 9-15

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Umgekehrt soll nun aber auch der Prediger die Zuhörer ansehen; er soll sie fort und fort im Auge behalten. Es ist merkwürdig, was sich in dieser Beziehung für Ungehörigkeiten finden. Da gibt es Prediger, die während des Predigens die Augen zumachen und sich gebärden, als sprächen sie zu einer unsichtbaren Welt. Andere heften ihre Augen fort und fort auf den Boden, als fürchteten sie sich und schämten sich, den Blicken der Zuhörer zu begegnen. Noch andere sehen beständig über die Anwesenden hinweg, etwa in eine Ecke der Dachstuhlung, als ob ihnen von dort immer neue Gedanken zur Fortsetzung ihres Vortrages zufließen. Als einst eine Frau auf gottesdienstliche Dinge in ihrer Gemeinde zu sprechen kam, sagte sie: "Our pastor preaches good sermons, but he has one fault when he preaches — you can never meet his eyes." Es ist sehr schwer für einen Pastor, sich solche Unschicklichkeiten abzugewöhnen; darum soll er darauf achten, daß er sich dergleichen nicht erst angewöhne.

Port Hope, Mich.

(Schluß folgt.)

E. Berner.

Sermon Study on Acts 16, 9-15.

(Eisenach Epistle-lesson for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.)

Recommended by the congregation at Antioch unto the grace of God, Paul, having chosen Silas as his companion, set out on his second missionary journey. After visiting the congregations founded by him on his first journey and having gained in young Timothy a new assistant, he entered Phrygia and Galatia, and then turned westward on one of the great military roads leading to the Aegean Sea. He was forbidden to preach in Asia, that Roman province comprising the southwestern portion of Asia Minor, and also from bringing the Gospel into Bithynia, the northern province. In what manner the Holy Spirit revealed His objection to the missionaries' plans we cannot say. Yet they obeyed since, after all, mission-work is God's work. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, as some variants read in v. 7, is the guiding and ruling Spirit of all missionary activities in the Church. Against His will and without His guidance we should undertake no work of missions. It must have seemed to Paul an almost unwarranted waste of time to go on day after day without once preaching the Gospel to those multitudes through which he passed and which were in such dire need of that very Gospel. Arriving at Troas, they are enlightened by the Holy Spirit Himself as to the purpose of their enforced silence. We read: "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." Who was this man of Macedonia? Ramsay identifies him with Luke. Others regard him as an actual Macedonian, still others, referring to Dan. 10, 13, regard him as

the tutelary angel of Macedonia or as an angel appearing in the form and garb of a Macedonian. Perhaps the latter is the best solution. We are unable to state how Paul knew that this was a Macedonian man, whether, as Blass surmises, he was recognizable as such from his dress or his dialect or whether God had revealed to Paul that this man was a Macedonian or whether, which seems to us the most plausible solution, the wording of his petition ("Come to Macedonia and help us") convinced Paul that it was a Macedonian speaking to him. Be that as it may, in this one man Macedonia, yea, Europe, was personified. Macedonia, Europe, cried for help. This vision does not teach the natural desire for salvation among the heathen. By nature man is spiritually dead; though he may recognize his sinfulness, though he may see the need of help, yet there is no desire and no natural inclination towards Jesus as the Savior of mankind. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. 12, 3.

V. 10. "After he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them." Note that here for the first time the first person plural is introduced. Undoubtedly St. Luke wishes to indicate thereby that at Troas he joined that little band of missionaries. The *Speaker's Commentary* may be correct in its conjecture: "This was just after the sojourn in Galatia, where sickness had detained the apostle, Gal. 4, 13, and it has been thought not unlikely that the beloved physician, being found resident at Troas, was consulted by St. Paul about his health." "Assuredly gathering," *συμβιβάζοντες*, putting together, concluding as the result of consultation with one another. In mission-work it is not only necessary to take heed of the guidance of God and prayerfully to hold communion with the Lord of missions, but, as we see here, prayerful consultation with fellow-Christians and fellow-workers as to the proper course to pursue is certainly not out of place. From careful consideration of all the circumstances they came to the conclusion that the Lord had called them. They doubted not that the Lord had sent this vision, according to His promise, Joel 2, 28. Now it became clear to them why the Holy Spirit had not permitted them to preach the Word in Asia and in Bithynia. They recognized the will of God that they were to continue their work no longer in Asia, but to proceed to another continent hitherto left without the services of the Apostle of the Gentiles. The hour when the sun of grace should rise above Europe and dispel the night of darkness had now come, and Paul and his companions were the chosen instruments to bring the light of the Gospel into benighted Europe, benighted indeed, in spite of all its learning and wisdom, its culture and philosophy. Westward Ho! was to be their slogan. They had the Gospel which the Lord Himself had committed to Paul, Gal. 1, 11, 12; 1 Cor. 11, 23. Europe needed this

Gospel, and the Lord had called them for the purpose of preaching this saving Gospel unto Europe. "And immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia"; without further delay, without further preparation, they were ready to go. The Lord had called. Did they have money? Why ask this question since the Lord had called them? Was it not foolhardy to enter upon an undertaking of this kind without practically any preparation? Why, no; the Lord had called them. Might not hardships, unsurmountable difficulties, arise? What of it? The Lord had called. Would success crown their efforts, or would the whole endeavor end in dismal failure? Theirs not to ask, to reason, theirs only to obey; for the Lord had called. This conviction swept aside all their doubts. Immediately they endeavored, aimed, strove, sought to go to Macedonia. What a splendid example of true obedience and missionary enthusiasm!

V. 11. While during the past weeks the Lord had put hindrances and obstacles in the way, now He showed clearly that He Himself was speeding them on their way. The Ruler of wind and waves commanded, and in willing obedience to His will they ceased their boisterous fury and swiftly carried the ship along, so that in a straight course, without being obliged to lose time because of opposing headwinds, in one day they came to the island of Samothracia and the next day to Neapolis. Travelers to Rome from the East that wished to avoid the long and dangerous voyage by sea usually landed at Neapolis, where began the Egnatian Road, the connecting link between the military roads of Asia and the world-famed Via Appia. Crossing Macedonia in an almost straight line, the Via Egnatiana led to Dyrrachium on the Adriatic, whence the traveler crossed over to Brundisium and was on the way to Rome. These splendid roads, built by the Romans for military and commercial purposes, now served to expedite the missionary campaign about to be inaugurated. What a boon to modern missionaries have similar conveniences proved, *viz.*, automobile, radio, airship!

In two days the little band of missionaries had accomplished a journey which at times required five days, Acts 20, 6. Luke evidently writes with the accuracy of an eye-witness and of one who closely observed all these details as having a bearing on the object of their journey. For the first time, as far as we know, Paul set his foot on European soil. Unheralded, unobserved, the four passengers leave the ship at the landing-place. No herald announced the coming of these ambassadors of the Lord of lords, sent by Him to establish His kingdom of righteousness and peace. Not one of those millions whose need and misery cried to heaven for help stands ready with open arms to welcome these messengers of salvation. As on all days, they did eat and drink, and they bought, and they sold, and they planted, and they built, all their thoughts occupied with worldly and material affairs.

Europe, thy salvation draweth nigh! But Europe, dead in trespasses and sins, knows it not.

Not, however, at Neapolis did Paul begin his missionary activities. They at once journeyed to Philippi, V. 12, "which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia and a colony. And we were in that city abiding certain days." Philippi was about ten miles from its port, Neapolis. Luke calls it the chief city, *πρώτη*, first. This expression may refer to the geographical situation, the first city of Macedonia, since Neapolis was at that time regarded a Thracian city. Or the word "first" may refer to rank. While it is true that at the time of the apostle Amphipolis was the capital of that part, district, *μερίς*, of Macedonia in which Philippi lay, yet Philippi may have been a rival in point of size and military and commercial importance, and a very successful rival, the first city indeed. Still others regard *πρώτη πόλις* as one phrase, the first *colony city*. Be that as it may, there is no reason to charge Luke, who was a contemporary historian and a close observer, with inaccuracy in a matter so uncertain in our day. Luke mentions the fact that Philippi was the first city and a colony in order to explain why Philippi rather than Neapolis was chosen as the starting-point of Paul's campaign. Paul's policy manifestly was to select cities from which the Gospel would readily radiate into the surrounding territory. While the Lord had told him to go to Macedonia, He did not tell him in every instance just which cities to choose. He leaves that to the judgment and common sense of His missionaries, whom He regards as His cooperators and to whom, like a wise ruler, He leaves the arrangement of many details so long as they do not conflict with His expressed will. Naturally, the co-operators being human and imperfect, mistakes may and will occur in the management of the mission-work. The mistakes, however, of faithful missionaries will always be forgiven and very frequently overruled by the Lord, who, after all, holds all the lines in His allmighty hand.

Philippi was chosen by Paul as a starting-point. Formerly Philippi was called *Κρηνίδες*, the fountains. Philippi was indeed to become a fountain from which the Water of Life would gush forth and become a mighty stream, watering many continents. Cp. Phil. 4, 15. 16; 1 Thess. 1, 8. Philippi was named for proud King Philip, who in 358 had fortified this important city and changed its name. Ever since Paul came to this city, it recalls to every Christian at once the name of the King of kings, at whose name every knee should bow, Phil. 2, 9 ff. Philippi was the scene of that battle in which Octavian and Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius and which decided the fate of the Roman Empire, B. C. 42. Here was to be fought the first battle between Christ and Satan for the supremacy over Europe, a battle which was to decide the spiritual fate of millions of Europeans for time and

eternity. Philippi was truly a cosmopolitan city. Originally a Greek city, it had become, about a hundred years before, a Roman colony. Here Roman prowess and statesmanship met with Greek culture and philosophy. Here indeed East met West, and West met East. "At Philippi, we are standing at the confluence of the stream of Europe and Asiatic life." (*Expositor's Greek Testament, in loc.*) Philippi was a colony, *κολωνία*. The Greeks were great colonizers, but their colonies were called *ἀποικία* or *ἐποικία*. *Κολωνία* is the Latin *colonia*. A Roman *colonia* served a twofold purpose. Usually a *colonia* was established at a point strategically important, from which the surrounding territory could be controlled readily. A strong garrison of Roman soldiers was placed in such a colony, which would easily quell any threatening disturbance and thus help to keep the mighty empire safe and secure. At the same time the veteran soldiers of Rome, having faithfully served their country, were assigned estates or homes at these colonies, Rome thus rewarding them for their services and also establishing at once a reliable Roman citizenry in these foreign parts. The wise strategy and statesmanship which had induced Rome to plant a colony at Philippi undoubtedly was instrumental in inducing Paul to make this important city also a strategic point in the expansion and safeguarding of the kingdom of Jesus.

The Roman colonies were granted certain privileges, chief among them Roman citizenship. Often they are called Romes in miniature, since the government was, like that of Rome, in the hand of two magistrates, *στρατηγοί*, praetors, Acts 16, 20, who ruled according to the laws of the Twelve Tables and after Roman methods. Roman citizenship and the rights and privileges thereby conferred may frequently have been held in higher esteem and may have been more sedulously guarded in these colonies than even in venal Rome. This explains why citizenship is especially stressed in the letter to the Philippians, chap. 1, 27: Let your conversation be, *i. e.*, behave, as citizens; 3, 20: Our conversation, citizenship. It may be that Paul sought the comparative safety for a Roman citizen of this city, since at Neapolis the rabble might have been roused against him more quickly and his life endangered more easily. He took every precaution to safeguard his own life and that of his companions. While ready to sacrifice our life for Jesus' sake and willing to go whithersoever He sends, there is no need of reckless waste of life nor of useless and fanatic striving after martyrdom; but in entire keeping with the words of our Master, Matt. 10, 23, we may make use of every means possible to safeguard our life and liberty. See Acts 16, 37; 17, 14; 22, 25; 23, 17 ff. This is the selfsame Paul who spoke his conviction Acts 20, 22-24; 21, 13.

V. 13. After having spent several days taking a survey and becoming acquainted with the surroundings at Philippi, "on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to

be made." The latter phrase has caused much difficulty. The word *ἔνομίζετο* is usually employed by Luke in the sense of "was supposed" or "thought to be." Most commentators translate it, however, as the English Bible does and refer to 2 Macc. 14, 4 as proof for this usage. There seems to me to be no reason to deviate from the usual sense in which the word is used by Luke. Undoubtedly they had inquired for a synagog. They found none. Their next question would naturally be, Is there any other place where Jews congregate? No one could give reliable information. Some thought or, as Luke puts it, "it was thought," that there might be a place for prayer on one of the creeks in the neighborhood. On the strength of this rather vague information they decided to make sure of the matter and follow up the rumor. That this is the true meaning of Luke seems to be established by the fact that a variant reads thus: "where *we* supposed a place of prayer to be." Undoubtedly the atmosphere at Philippi was unfavorable to the Jews and their religion to such an extent that only Jewish women assembled, at least on this occasion, at their place of prayer. True missionaries will not be at once discouraged, but will investigate every rumor in the hope of establishing contact with the missionary prospects. When they came to the river, perhaps the Gangras, a small stream nearly dry in summer, they found only women present. Undisturbed and undiscouraged by this fact, they sat down as was the custom among the Jewish rabbis (cp. Luke 4, 20), and spake to the women the Word of Life. And behold! v. 14, "a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us." Thyatira was a city of the Asiatic province of Lydia, whose inhabitants gained their living by traffic and especially by the art of dyeing in purple. In fact, Thyatira was known for the beauty of the ware produced there. According to the historian Strabo, Thyatira was a Macedonian colony. Here at Thyatira a Jewish colony had also been planted. Perhaps Lydia had first become acquainted with the faith and hope of Israel at her home town. Whether she was married we cannot tell. It seems improbable that her husband, if she had been married, was still living, since he is not so much as mentioned although her household is spoken of. Evidently she was a woman of some means, since a business of this kind could not have been carried on without sufficient capital. How strange the ways of God are! A woman of Lydia, one of the provinces where Paul had been forbidden to preach the Gospel, was one of the first women in Europe to hear the Gospel. An Asiatic had to come from Asia to Europe to be the first convert to Christ. Perhaps Lydia was instrumental in bringing the Gospel to her native town, where a flourishing church existed in the time of John the Apostle. Cp. Rev. 2, 18. This Lydia "heard us," *ἤκουσεν*. The imperfect tense indicates that she was in the act of listening to Paul when that occurred which is told in

the second half of v. 14: "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." She had been *αβουμένη τὸν θεόν*, a proselyte of the gate, perhaps a *believing* follower of the Messiah. Now the Lord opened her heart. *Καρδιά*, the heart, is the center and seat of life, physical, mental, spiritual, our "soul" or "mind," the fountain and seat of the intellect, emotions, and will. Her "soul" was opened, every phase of her soul-life affected. Her intellect was touched by the almighty hand of God, so that she understood that Jesus was the promised Messiah. She gained that knowledge which, according to John 17, 3, is eternal life. Knowing that Jesus was her Savior, she rejoiced in Him, embracing Him in loving faith and faithful love. Knowing and loving Him as her Redeemer, her sole purpose of life, her entire will, was directed to serve Him who had come to render her the most precious service. In a word, she was converted, her entire soul-life changed. And this conversion was due to the Lord alone. As the Lord had made her a proselyte of the gate, so now the Lord awakened in her heart true faith in Christ Jesus as the Messiah of the world. Conversion is *in toto* a work of the Lord. And this work of the Lord is accomplished by the preaching of the Gospel. "She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." But that she attended to these things was due to the fact that her heart had been opened by the Lord. Lydia would not have been saved had she not believed. She would never have believed, had she not heard. She could not have heard, had not Paul preached. And Paul could not have preached, had he not been sent by the brethren. Truly, missionary work is cooperating with the Lord God in the noble work of bringing men to the possession of everlasting life; yet all our cooperation will be of no avail if the Lord open not the heart of man.

V. 15. When she was baptized, undoubtedly after being thoroughly indoctrinated, she in turn persuaded her household to be baptized with her. Every Christian is a missionary, trying his utmost to lead others, especially those of his household, to the selfsame knowledge of Christ Jesus. The household consisted undoubtedly of slaves and assistants in her business. Since we do not even know whether she was married, much less whether she had any small children, nor whether in her household were included small children, we cannot use this text as a proof that the custom of infant baptism dates back to apostolic times. Infant baptism rests on Matt. 28, 19 as its foundation. As soon as she was baptized, she besought us, saying: "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there," make my house your own; "and she constrained us." The apostle and his companions could not resist, even if on first inclination they would rather have refused this kind invitation. They may have even voiced their dissent. Yet all their excuses were swept away, all their objections overruled, and the Christian love, the desire

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of this disciple to serve her Master and His servants, gained the day. They abode with Lydia. Faith, which worketh by love, Gal. 5, 6, will always find ways and means to serve. Christianity knits the hearts together and makes of strangers brethren and sisters, willing to exercise that unstinted hospitality which so manifestly distinguished the Christians of the first century from the surrounding heartlessness and selfishness.

Lydia, the first-fruit of the apostle's work in Europe. How bountiful the harvest that has since been gathered throughout the centuries, is still being gathered, and will be gathered as long as the world shall stand! Truly, the work of missions, undertaken in the right spirit, will be blessed with success by the Lord of missions.

In conclusion we offer a few outlines on this wonderful mission-text. *In Doing Mission-work, We Are Coworkers of God.* 1. Obeying His call; 2. preaching His Word; 3. reaping His harvest. — *To God All Glory in the Work of Missions.* 1. He calls us into this work; 2. He gives us His Word to preach; 3. He grants success to our efforts. — *What a Blessed Work the Work of Missions Is.* Thereby we are 1. obeying the law of love to God; 2. fulfilling the law of love to our neighbor. — *The Wondrous Effect of the Gospel of Christ.* 1. It brings people to saving faith. 2. It works warm-hearted love and affection. — *Let Us Never Cease in Our Missionary Endeavors.* 1. Because we have the Gospel; 2. because the Gospel alone can save; 3. because this Gospel will not be preached in vain. — *A Lesson on Missions.* 1. On the mission policy; 2. on the mission means; 3. on the success of missions. — *The Macedonian Call "Come and Help Us!"* 1. So calls the need of sinful man. 2. So calls the Lord of His Church. — *How is Man Brought to Faith?* 1. The Gospel is preached to him. 2. By such preaching his heart is opened. THEO. LAETSCH.

**Dispositionen über die zweite von der Synodalkonferenz
angenommene Evangelienreihe.**

Elfter Sonntag nach Trinitatis.

Joh. 9, 1—17.

Schon im Alten Testament wird Jesus das Licht der Welt genannt, Jes. 9, 2 (vgl. mit Matth. 4, 13—17); 42, 6. 7; 49, 6. Als solches haben ihn auch die Gläubigen des Neuen Testaments erkannt: der alte Simeon, Luk. 2, 31. 32; Johannes, Joh. 1, 4. 5. 8. 9. 14. In unserm Evangelium nennt sich Jesus selber das Licht der Welt.

„Dieweil ich bin in der Welt, bin ich das Licht der Welt.“

Darin liegt zweierlei:

1. Jesus vertreibt die Finsternis.
2. Er wirkt, solange es Tag ist.