

THE CRY OF THE MAN OF MACEDONIA

Act 16:9 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.

Let us remember that prior to this vision, the Apostle Paul appeared determined to travel to Asia but the Spirit of the Lord hindered him. “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not” (Acts 16: 6,7). Why did Paul want to go to Asia and not Europe? Could it be that, as a devout Jew, he despised the polytheism and philosophical antagonism towards God that flourished in the West? Scripture does not tell us but let us read between the lines and draw some important spiritual lessons for our own exhortation today. Here was a great man of God, Paul, who was filled with the power of Jesus to save, heal and convert the entire world. No wonder the Lord carefully directed his every move “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The above is not to say that Paul harbored prejudice against Europeans, as Peter Cleary did, but that he perhaps did not hold out much hope for the Gospel to succeed among Europeans steeped in the thoughts of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

1Co 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

We can imagine Paul becoming frustrated when the Lord closed two doors. He and his missionary team decided to seek the Lord diligently. Imagine his surprise when a vision of a man of Macedonia appeared to him. Macedonia is synonymous with Alexander the Great, the man who more than any other was responsible for the spread of the Hellenistic civilization from Greece to India – a man who believed that the world had to be “saved” through Greek culture and learning. What a powerful statement the Lord Jesus sent to the Apostle Paul, the first missionary to Europe! God was now declaring war on the center of European and pagan civilization. Jesus was going straight for the snake’s head. It was the same Paul who later appeared before Rome’s Caesar. Let there be no mistake – King Jesus wants the kings and powers of this world to know that he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Jesus was now fulfilling the prophecy he shared with Ananias, “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the

children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Let us not fear the name of a city, civilization or king, be it Washington D.C., London, a President or King.

Act 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

Act 10:35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Next, the man of Macedonia tells Paul, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us”. Now consider this powerful, irresistible imagery of a city famed for producing Alexander the Great and the spread of Greek civilization worldwide now pleading and begging the Apostle Paul to help it. The city was choking and dying in its polytheism and intellectual arrogance; it desperately needed salvation. Whatever prejudice and perhaps contempt the Apostle Paul had for the Greeks evaporated when he heard the brokenness of the man of Macedonia. The Greek word for “help” is *boētheō*. In Mark 9, the father whose son was thrown into the fire by a demon also employed the same word when he asked the Lord for help. “And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us” (Mark 9:22). It was as if the entire Greek civilization went on its knees and begged the Apostle Paul to come and help. God knows how to soften and break our hearts so we can be “... made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (I Cor 9:22). The great countries and civilizations of our time need the Gospel as desperately as the man of Macedonia did. Let us pray the Lord to see the vision of the man of Macedonia today!

Act 16:10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

Many Bible scholars believe the man of Macedonia was Luke the Evangelist. We cannot know this for sure, but it is interesting that the pronoun changes from “they” in Acts 16:8 to “us” in Acts 16:10. Luke is believed to be the author of the Book of Acts so there is an indication that the “us” refers to the point at which he joined the missionary team. Could it be that Paul recognized Luke as the man of Macedonia upon meeting him which was a confirmation of the authenticity of his vision? It is a tantalizing argument. God knows how to direct those who are his witnesses. “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13).

We know what happened in Macedonia. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, the first European convert. “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14). God delivered a girl who was controlled by a demon which led to beatings and imprisonment. Paul and Silas prayed and worshipped the Lord because they could share the Gospel. Let us learn from their example: when the Gospel is in chains, we can still praise and worship. This is why we praise and worship in church before the sermon comes. Praise and worship loosens the chains and cause them to break off. Hallelujah!

Act 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

Act 16:26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

Let us summarize this message and identify lessons we ought to apply to our Christian walk. Have we been trying to open doors in places and among people that we are most comfortable with? Have we been resisting the vision to go the Macedonians of today? Does the Lord have to bring a sheet down from heaven and challenge our prejudices, as he did Peter? Listen carefully and you will hear the cry of the man of Macedonia – Paul, *boētheō* – come and help us! The same Devil who has tormented us and the Lord Jesus cast out, is also tormenting the Macedonians. Let us go to Macedonia, in Jesus’ name! God will send Luke along the way to confirm his call and great things will happen in Macedonia.