

The Open Door in Troas

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Acts 16:6-12 - From Troas, the Gospel enters Europe, the first European church is Philippi, and the first European converts are the woman Lydia, the jailor and their families.
 - 1. 2Cor. 2:12-14 - In Troas, Paul receives instructions to carry the Gospel to Europe, the origin of most of our ancestors. As Jerusalem is the place where the Gospel began to be preached, so Troas is the place where the Gospel was to leave the Mediterranean region and eventually come to us.
 - 2. Acts 20:5-12 - Troas is the city where authority for weekly observance of the Lord's Supper is outlined, and the place where young Eutychus was raised from the dead by the apostle Paul.
- B. Background
 - 1. Alexandria Troas, also called Sigeia, is near modern day Dalyan, Çanakkale Province, Turkey. The remnants of the ancient city occupy about 990 acres with only a few structures remaining today: a ruined public bath, a theatre, a gymnasium complex, an aqueduct built by Trajan, and chariot racing stadium. The old walls had a circumference of about 6.25 miles, and were fortified with towers.
 - 2. It was the chief port of north-west Asia Minor with two enormous harbors, and it prospered in Roman times, becoming a free and autonomous city. In its heyday the city may have had a population of about 100,000. Constantine considered making Troas the capital of the Roman Empire.

I. CLOSED DOORS

- A. Do you ever get discouraged in your efforts at reaching out to others with the gospel message? Does it seem like we are teaching hearts of stone that have no interest in God's gracious offer of a new life?
 - 1. It is easy to get discouraged if we forget our dependence upon the sovereign will of God. We are limited in what we can accomplish, and God has ordained it to be that way.
 - 2. We can make plans, but ultimately God is the one who closes certain doors and opens other doors of opportunity - 1Cor. 3:5-7
 - 3. The power is in the Gospel and the power behind the Gospel is God; we are merely the vessels that carry it from place to place
 - 4. God will open the door for the preaching of the word, and God's word will open the hearts of those who will receive it
- B. Learn to accept the fact that some doors are closed, and that is God's will
 - 1. Acts 16:6-7 - Two closed doors: Asia and Bithynia
 - 2. Looked like a good opportunity and a place where they had had some success in the past, like a well-known fishing hole

3. Strangely counterintuitive: they were commanded to speak the word and yet forbidden by the Holy Spirit in certain settings
- C. God's will trumps our reasoning and wishes
1. James 4:13-15; Prov. 19:21, 16:9; Lam. 3:37
 2. Paul learned the lesson - Acts 18:21; Rom. 1:10
 3. There is everything right in taking the initiative with the Gospel, but when it becomes evident that the door is closed, trust God and look for another door.
 4. Many have persons dear to them that they yearn to see baptized, but when it seems clear that is not going to happen in the present, find another door, teach another person.
 5. To fixate on a single person to the exclusion of others is putting our will and wishes about the wisdom of God Who opens and closes doors
- D. How do we know that a door is closed?
1. "How the Holy Spirit did his preventive work on these two occasions we can only guess. It may have been through giving (them) a strong, united inward (directive), or through some outward circumstance like illness, Jewish opposition or a legal ban, or through the utterance of a prophet..." (Stott)
 2. "At the time, Paul probably had no idea of the greatness of God's purpose. God wanted to give him a continent for Jesus, and to give all of us the man whom God would use to write more of the New Testament than anyone else. God knows what He is doing when he says, 'No.'" (Guzik)

II. OPEN DOORS

- A. Acts 16:8-12 - An open door in Macedonia
1. Paul did not get frustrated and quit; he took the next opportunity presented to him.
 2. He was made restless by the closed doors, but only because he was eager to preach the Gospel. His restless spirit facilitated his ability to quickly take advantage of the next opportunity
- B. How can we know that a door is open?
1. Acts 16:10 "...immediately we sought to go into Macedonia concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."
 2. God didn't specifically tell them to go to Macedonia; He gave them a sign from which they had to draw a reasonable conclusion
 3. We need to put aside what we want to do, where we want to go, and who we want to teach, and instead look for where we can go, who we can teach, and what God would have us do.
 4. Are we objectively looking at the signs, or are we stubbornly persisting in what we want to do and the way we want to do it?

III. CLOSED AND OPEN HEARTS

- A. The door will be open where there are people who need the Gospel

1. Philippi was an important Roman city filled with people who were accustomed to the good life, great wealth, the exercise of power, and the pursuit of pleasure.
 2. It is either a city where no one is interested in the Gospel, or a place that is looking for the Gospel. You cannot know until you try.
 3. Paul went where the people were
- B. The door will be open where there are people who are already religious
1. They will either be people who are content with their erring faith, or they may be seeking for truth and are waiting, like the Ethiopian Eunuch, for someone to come along and guide them. You can't know until you ask
 2. Paul's first contacts were Jewish women in prayer service - Acts 16:13
 3. God opens hearts - Acts 16:14
- C. The door will be opened by a life change or great crisis
1. They will either be people too preoccupied to want to take an interest in the Gospel, or the crisis may have opened their hearts to the Gospel. You cannot know until you ask
 2. Paul taught the Gospel to the unlikeliest of prospects: a pagan prison warden about to commit suicide - Acts 16:25-34
 3. Often a life change or crisis is God opening the door for the Gospel.

Conclusion:

- A. "Often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has been opened for us." (Helen Keller)
- B. God wants souls to be saved; He wants us to be the means by which they hear of salvation; He knows the best time for us to reach them.
- C. Let Him be the keeper of the doors; we just need to be looking for the doors He has opened and be ready at any moment to walk through.
- D. 2Cor. 4:6; 2Thes. 2:13-14