

# I Want to Know about That Glow!

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## Introduction

### The Text

- A. Last time we looked at [vv. 6-10](#). This time we're going to focus in on [vv. 11-15](#), but I did want to read back from [v. 6](#) for context . . .

<sup>6</sup> And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. <sup>7</sup> And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. <sup>8</sup> So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. <sup>9</sup> And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." <sup>10</sup> And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

<sup>11</sup> So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, <sup>12</sup> and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. <sup>13</sup> And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. <sup>14</sup> One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. <sup>15</sup> And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. (Acts 16:6-15)

### Everyday Missionaries

- A. The book of Acts, on the whole, is about the spread of the gospel—from the epicenter of Jerusalem where everything began, on out to the rest of the world.
1. So, naturally then, it makes sense that this book is going to teach us—if not by direct instruction, than certainly by example and inference—what it looks like to go with the gospel . . . what it looks like to be a missionary, to live on mission for God in this world.
    - a. And I realize you might say: "Well, I'm not a missionary, I'm just an ordinary Christian. Missionaries, are the super-Christian type, that's not me."
- B. But, as far as I see it, there are various ways to take that word "missionary":
1. There's the more formal sense in which, yes okay they're the ones who are oversees or sharing the gospel in a more vocational way, we could say. They are capital-M missionaries.
  2. But there is also a more informal sense we get from Scripture as well. What we see there is that really all Christians are missionaries, "sent ones" of God—if not in a capital-M sense than certainly in a lowercase one.

- a. This is why Charles Spurgeon, for example, would famously say: “Every Christian . . . is either a missionary or an impostor.”
  - b. Perhaps that sounds a bit harsh to you at first hearing, but, in the sermon from which that little statement comes, he goes on to flesh out a bit further what he means, and I think it’s hard to argue with him. So he says: “You either try to spread abroad the kingdom of Christ, or else you do not love him at all. It cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue about him. . . . [T]hat man who says, ‘I believe in Jesus’ but does not think enough of Jesus ever to tell another about him . . . is an impostor” (“A Sermon and a Reminiscence”).
- C. I don’t want to be an impostor. I don’t want you to be an impostor. I want us to be a church full of everyday missionaries.
- 1. So what does that look like? Where do we begin?
    - a. Well, that is where the book of Acts is so helpful in general.
    - b. And that is where the text we have before us this morning is so helpful in particular. Because we get to watch these guys moving on mission for God. We get to see what it looks like. We get to learn from them.
- D. So I’m going to draw out six lessons learned from this text. My hope is that this will encourage us along as everyday missionaries here in the Bay Area.

## Lesson #1: Be Ready to Go Whenever and Wherever God Calls

- A. With this, I am actually reaching back into those verses we looked at last time.
- 1. Because I think there you see what’s really in the heart of a missionary. They’re just saying to God: “Hey, point me in a direction, any direction, and I’ll go.”
- B. If you recall, they had been trying to bring the gospel to these various places and God was saying: “No, not right now. I actually want you to go here instead, to Macedonia.”
- 1. So off they go.
  - 2. There is no arguing. There is no back and forth. “Oh God please, I don’t like the culture, don’t like the food, don’t love the accommodations, I have things to do here, I had different plans, I’m not up for a change,” or whatever.
    - a. No! They’re ready to go whenever and wherever God calls.
- C. I thought of that classic text from [Isa. 6](#) on this point. Perhaps you remember it. The prophet says: “I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said [without hesitation], ‘Here I am! Send me’” (v. 8).

1. Is that your impulse? Is that your reflex? Is that your modus operandi? “Here I am! Send me.”
- D. Where does that kind of heart even come from? How do you get it?
1. It’s interesting, if you go back to the context of [Isa. 6](#), you see what’s moving Isaiah.
    - a. It wasn’t just a fear of God in his holiness: “I guess I better go lest he consume me in judgement or something.” No.
      - i. He had just had that famous vision of God in his glory. And, if you remember, at first, it didn’t actually move him, it paralyzed him. “I shouldn’t go. Who am I to think I could go. ‘Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips’ (v. 5). I’m not going to talk for you.”
    - b. So it wasn’t a vision of God’s holiness alone that got Isaiah moving. His response in [v. 8](#) there only came after he finally got grace.
      - i. You remember, an angel took a burning coal from the altar in heaven, touched his unclean lips with it and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for” (v. 7).
    - c. Then comes [v. 8](#): “Who will go for us?” “I will!” “Here I am! Send me.”
- E. It’s only when a sense of the holiness of God is brought together with a fresh experience of the mercy of God that an eruption is set off in the heart of a person. It makes a missionary of you, propelling you outward to the world around.
1. You see his holiness and his glory, on the one hand. “I deserve judgment for my sin.”
  2. But you see his mercy and his grace and his love, on the other hand. “Somehow, even still, I’m forgiven. I’m washed.” I’m free because of Jesus, the altar of sacrifice.
  3. So you want to go . . . whenever, wherever he calls!
- F. Where is God calling you? It might be across oceans, it might be across the street. Wherever it is, are you ready to go?

## Lesson #2: When in Doubt, Start with the Bigger Cities

- A. I think this is interesting. If you noticed, in our text, the vision is given and the call comes forth: “Come over to Macedonia” ([v. 9](#)). But, as a Roman province, Macedonia is quite large, and they’re not told precisely where to go.
1. So what do they do? They start with the big cities: “<sup>11</sup>So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis,<sup>12</sup> and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days” (vv. 11-12).

- a. They just go set up camp there. This is where we should start—with a “leading city” in this district: Philippi.
- b. And after this, where are they going to go Thessalonica. The capital city of Macedonia.
  - i. So Philippi wasn’t just a one-off. This is the strategy these missionaries employ all through the book of Acts.
  - ii. As John Stott puts it: “It seems to have been Paul’s deliberate policy to move purposefully from one strategic city-centre to the next” (BST).

B. But why? Why start here? Why, when in doubt, start with the bigger cities?

- 1. Well, it’s really not all that complicated. I can think of a couple reasons right away that make such a move missionally strategic . . .

C. For one thing, big cities have more people.

- 1. If the goal of the missionary is to reach people with the gospel, well then it makes sense that you want to go where the most people are. And that would be the bigger cities.
- 2. I thought of how God sends Jonah to reach Nineveh with his grace.
  - a. All throughout he keeps calling Nineveh “that great city” . . . “that great city” . . . “that great city” (1:2; 3:2, 3; 4:11). It was the capital of Assyria at the time.
  - b. But why was this city so “great” in God’s eyes, and why would he send his prophet there?
    - i. Well, I think that’s what’s made plain in the very last verse of the book. When even at the end Jonah is still struggling with his calling and upset at the Lord for extending compassion to his personal enemies, God says this: “[S]hould not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left . . . ?” (Jonah 4:11).
    - ii. In other words: “I sent you there, because there’s a lot of people there. It’s a great city, because there’s great need.”

D. But then, secondly, big cities have more influence.

- 1. A lot of times, if you reach the city, you reach the broader region and even on out into the world.
  - a. They are the cultural, political, educational, institutional, professional, religious headwaters that flow downstream to the rest of society.
- 2. I think this is why Paul could write to those he reached with the gospel in the capital city of Thessalonica and say: “<sup>7</sup> [Y]ou became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in

Achaia. <sup>8</sup>For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere” (1 Thess. 1:7-8).

- a. Certainly, one of the reasons they had such influence was because they were living in such a big city.
- E. One commentator sums up things for us like this: “The world that we enter in the book of Acts is the most modern in all the Bible by virtue of its urban identity. Most of the action occurs in the famous cities of the Greco-Roman world, not in the local villages or the countryside. This prevailingly metropolitan world is, moreover, international and cosmopolitan. There is a sense in which the city is vindicated in the history of the early church—not in the sense that the city is mainly good or cordial to the gospel but in the sense that the city is where most people now live and where the influential power structures exist. . . . It is easy to see that the mission strategy of the early church was to evangelize the city. It is no exaggeration to say that in Acts the church is almost exclusively associated with the city” (Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, “City”).
- F. I think this does mean that you and I are situated in a particularly special place so far as the mission of God is concerned. I know I count it a profound privilege to be called to the Bay Area, to represent Jesus in Silicon Valley.
  - 1. You’ve likely heard the phrase: “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.” Well that may be true for sin city (although, of course, God knows and it will always come out in the end!).
  - 2. But it’s the precise opposite for our cluster of cities here in the Bay. What happens in Silicon Valley, doesn’t stay in Silicon Valley, it goes out into all the world. What happens here goes everywhere.
- a. So if and when we reach people in our region for Jesus, we are, in effect, reaching people all across the globe.

### Lesson #3: Look for Where God Is Already Moving

- A. If you noticed, these missionaries in our text begin here by going first to those who are already, at least in theory, most likely to be open to the things of God.
  - 1. As is typical for Paul, he looks first for the Jews or Gentile “God-fearers” in the area that he might reach. These are those who have already received the OT as God’s Word and are likely, then, already looking for the Christ promised therein.
    - a. God’s already been moving on their hearts in that way.
    - b. And then he’s able to come in and carry along that same trajectory: “You’re trusting in YHWH, you’re reading his Word, you’re seeking his will, you’re looking for the Messiah, well here’s where it’s all pointing. Let me tell you about Jesus and what he accomplished for us at the cross.”
    - c. This is undoubtedly what is happening there in v. 13: “And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.”

B. Now, how might we apply this lesson to our own context here in the Bay Area?

1. Well, I think God is always on the move in a person's life in some way.
2. And it's our job to look for it, to listen for it, to locate it, so that we can partner with God in that and lead them to Jesus in it.
  - a. So if people are reading the OT Scriptures—well great, we can start there and show them how all of that leads to Jesus.
  - b. But, in our area, people are probably much more likely to be reading the news or social media feeds or anything else other than the Scriptures—so what then?

C. Well, in my view, the whole world is an evangelist's playground. We all live in God's world. We've all been made in God's image. So all of life provides onramps to God's truth.

1. All roads lead to Christ—you just have to identify which road a person is currently traveling down and show them the way to Jesus from there.

D. So, for example, in our culture right now, social justice is a big deal. Everyone cares about human rights and justice for the oppressed and all this. We post and picket about it. We stand for it.

1. And that's well and good. As a Christian we can affirm their passion to see justice established in this world. Their desire for such a thing is evidence of them being made in God's image and it's some indication of God at work in their hearts, whether they realize it or not.
2. And it's our job and joy to come in and help them see, this passion they have, this longing they feel deep in their bones, for social equity and justice and all this, there's really no legitimate basis for it outside of the Christian worldview.
3. You certainly can't sufficiently account for it in an atheistic or evolutionary worldview.
  - a. If there is no God, then there is no absolute truth or morality, and I can't meaningfully say such a thing is right or wrong with any real conviction at all. It just is. It's neither here nor there.
  - b. But I feel like it's wrong, terribly wrong.
  - c. If human existence is ultimately driven by survival of the fittest, then why do I care about oppression and injustice? Let the strong eat the weak. That's just the way of things.
  - d. But I feel in my bones like it shouldn't be that way.
    - i. Why? Because whether I realize it or not, I'm "God-haunted." I've been made in his image, his law is written on my heart. His Spirit is at work.

- ii. And the missionary comes in and gets to show you how what you are so desperately longing for, only Jesus can ultimately provide. He's the one who's come to make all the wrong right—out there, but also in here.
- 4. This is why, as I've mentioned before, a prominent atheist like Richard Dawkins, once so vitriolic in his denouncing of Christianity, is now calling himself a "cultural Christian."
  - a. He's not a believer.
  - b. But, nevertheless, he's come to realize that the Christian worldview offers the best basis for societal and cultural health and stability.
- 5. Other once prominent atheists like Ayaan Hirsi Ali, have gone even further and fully embraced the faith in view of such things.
- 6. And this sort of this is even gaining momentum across the Bay Area. Runo just sent me an article from Vanity Fair the other day talking about how Silicon Valley tech movers-and-shakers are opening to Christianity in some similar and significant ways. They need guidance, they're certainly going off the rails of orthodoxy in some significant ways at points, but it would seem God is moving in some fundamental ways.
- E. So you locate where God is already working in a person's heart and you walk with them towards Jesus from there.

## Lesson #4: Don't Forget to Open Your Mouth

- A. This is another one of those points that should go without being said, and yet still it needs to be said.
  - 1. Yes we love people, we want to serve people.
  - 2. But we mustn't stray from the fact that the good news is fundamentally just that: news.
    - a. It is a message to be heralded: about God and man, sin and wrath, grace and mercy, repentance and faith, heaven and hell, and the cross of Christ that makes all the difference.
    - b. We've got to tell them about Jesus—what he has done to make a way for sinners to get back into saving and satisfying relationship with a holy and beautiful God.
      - i. We've got to open our mouths.
- B. I know that's the scariest part for a lot of us.
  - 1. We could help people and serve people all day.
  - 2. But as Paul puts it in [Rom. 10:14](#): "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" It's worth the risk.
- C. We see this plainly in our text, first just right on the surface of the story:

1. V. 13: “And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.”
  2. V. 14: “One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”
    - a. There is speaking going on here. Heralding is happening by the riverside.
- D. But I think the piece that struck me the most in all this was the connection that was made in the verses prior back when Paul is first receiving that vision.
1. Look at vv. 9-10 again: “<sup>9</sup> And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ <sup>10</sup> And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” Did you catch that?
    - a. The man says: “Come and help!”
    - b. These missionaries conclude: “Therefore, we must go and preach (the gospel!).”
  2. The conclusion isn’t: “Therefore, we must go and serve them soup.”
    - a. Although that is a perfectly valid thing to do in your effort to reach people. Serve them all you want. Jesus does it. Jesus calls us to it.
    - b. But, at the end of the day, if that’s all you do, if that’s where your missionary endeavors stop—all you’re really doing is filling their bellies while their souls languish.
      - i. You are padding their pathway as they carry on to hell.
      - ii. You are passing out candy in a cancer ward.
        - (1) That’s nice of you. It may brighten their day for a moment.
        - (2) But that’s not going to help them with the stuff they really need. They need the cancer gone. They need the tumor to shrink.
- E. “Come and help!” Can I just put it bluntly: If we don’t preach the gospel we don’t ultimately help. Our business, brothers and sisters, is fundamentally an eternal one.
1. As John Piper has famously said: “Christians [should] care about all suffering, especially eternal suffering.”
    - a. So don’t forget to open your mouth!

## Lesson #5: Trust Him to Do the Deeper Work



- A. I'm getting this from that stunning little statement at the end of [v. 14](#) where Luke tells us that, as Paul was sharing the gospel with these ladies, there was a woman named Lydia listening in and "[t]he Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul."
1. It wasn't Paul's oratory brilliance that kept her rapt attention.
    - a. We know from other places in Scripture that people didn't consider him that eloquent of a speaker (cf. [2 Cor. 11:6](#); [1 Cor. 1:17](#)).
    - b. In fact, in one story we're told a guy falls asleep while he's preaching, falls back out the window where he'd been sitting and dies. (At least I can say that hasn't happened to me yet. Some of you have fallen asleep, I see you. But at least no one has fallen so deeply asleep that they just carry on through the doorway of death. "I would rather die than wake back up and have to listen this guy any further.")
  2. So, again, it wasn't Paul's oratory brilliance that kept Lydia's rapt attention. What was it? God's sovereign grace: "[The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.](#)"
    - a. To put it simply: your job is to open your mouth; God's job is to open their hearts.
- B. Someone just recently pointed out to me, on that last day, when we stand before God . . .
1. God isn't going to say: "Well done good and eloquent servant, good and clever servant, good and successful servant, good and [whatever else] servant."
  2. He's going to say what, according to Jesus in [Matt. 25](#): "[Well done, good and faithful servant](#)" ([vv. 21, 23](#)).
    - a. That's your job. That's your part. Be faithful.
    - b. You are not responsible for the results. Leave that to him and his sovereign grace.
- C. I'll tell you, that is my hope every Sunday.
1. If I thought it was on me to save you or get you through to glory or something, if I thought your salvation was hanging on my presentation—I would have quit this gig a long time ago. I would have buckled and broken under the weight of that.
  2. So this truth is a lifesaver for me. "Nick, come in, open your mouth, be as faithful as you can be to God and his Word. And let him do with that what seems good to him."
- D. It's like that other parable Jesus tells in [Mark 4:26-27](#): "[26 The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. 27 He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how.](#)"
1. This guy scatters the seed and then he sleeps. He's done his part.
  2. And when stuff grows, there's only one real explanation for it . . . it's God!
- E. This is clearly the way Paul understands his own "success" in ministry as he talks about it elsewhere. Just to give you a couple of examples from his ministry in the province of Macedonia:

1. Here's how he later opens his letter to those in Philippi who must have come to faith during his time there: "<sup>3</sup> I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:3-6).
    - a. Notice, who does Paul "thank" for their embrace of and partnership in the gospel? God. Because it's his doing not Paul's.
    - b. It's God "who began a good work in you . . ." I didn't start that. He did.
  2. Or later to those in Thessalonica, he says something similar: "<sup>2</sup> We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers . . . <sup>4</sup> For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, <sup>5</sup> because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thess. 1:2, 4-5).
    - a. In other words: he opened your hearts to pay attention to what we said to you about Jesus.
- F. So open your mouth and trust God to do the deeper work.
1. To see it any other way is to both underplay the hardness of the human heart in sin and overplay your own ability to break through and control the situation.
    - a. Listen: they're not getting it and you're not convincing them . . . unless God breaks in with sovereign grace.
    - b. It's how you got saved. It's how everyone gets saved. "The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul."
      - i. So trust him to do the deeper work.

## Lesson #6: Stay the Course through the Good and the Hard

- A. This last one here actually reaches into the verses that are coming next in the rest of Acts 16. I'm especially interested in how all of this connects to that vision Paul received calling him to come to Macedonia back in v. 9. And here's what I mean . . .
1. Oftentimes, when we get a sense of God's calling, we tend to think, okay, here's what I can expect: if God is in it, it's going to go well. Things are going to be smooth. I'll have success at every turn. If he's calling, I should be comfortable.
  2. If things start to get hard, we question. Maybe I didn't hear from God. Maybe I got it wrong.
- B. But here's what I want you to catch: they get this vision: "Come over to Macedonia and help us." So they go . . .

1. And yes, in this first little vignette with Lydia, it goes as we might expect: smoothly, successfully, all seems well. We heard right!
  2. But then, what we'll come to next week, it's like everything falls apart. The wheels come off. And now suddenly they find themselves attacked by the crowds, beaten by the authorities, and imprisoned.
    - a. And you've got to think the temptation at this point, at least for us, would be to say: "Maybe we didn't hear right. I thought if God is calling us to something, if God is with us in something, it will be easy, doors will just fling open wide, all will go well. What are we doing with bruises on our backs and chains around our feet. And the doors aren't opening, they're quite literally locked, and we're inside."
  3. But they stayed the course. They didn't give up. They didn't succumb to temptation. Because they know that Christ's call comes with Christ's cross.
    - a. Sometimes you have success on the mission field just because you opened your mouth (as with Lydia).
    - b. But a lot of times it comes through hardship and suffering in love for the people you're trying to reach (as with the Philippian jailer who we'll meet next time).
      - i. He sees how they suffer—still with joy and love and self-sacrifice—and that's what opens him up to the gospel.
        - (1) They're not just talking about the cross.
        - (2) They're living it; they're carrying it; they're putting it on display in the way they suffer and yet carry on in love.
- C. So don't see hardship or suffering or even initial rejection and persecution as a hinderance to your ministry or missionary endeavors.
1. On the contrary. It is an opportunity to show that Jesus is worth more to you than life.
    - a. What they won't receive from you when all is going well for you, they just might receive from you when everything is falling down around you . . . and still you come, still you love, still you have joy.
    - b. Sometimes people won't see Christ burning brightly in you until everything goes dark around you. How is there still light? What's the source of this for you? "I want to know about that glow!"
      - i. (Maybe you were wondering where the title of this sermon came from? Well, the title of this sermon came from the last line of it.)
      - ii. Don't you want people saying that about you? You've got to stay the course through the good and the hard.