

THE DREAM THAT SAVED AMERICA

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AC 16:9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

AC 16:11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis.¹² From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

Dreams! The Bible talks about them. We all have them. Freud wrote about them. Doctors study them. We sometimes wonder what they mean. This dream of Paul’s was specific – a man of Macedonia, standing, begging, pleading, “come over to Macedonia and help us.” This was the dream that saved America, and the dream that saved the Western World. This was the first time that the Gospel would come to European soil, the initial impact of the Gospel, a pebble thrown into a stream that reverberated until it reached the shores of Europe and America and unto all the world. This Macedonian Dream was the “Dream that Saved America.”

When I think of this dream, I think of a conversation I had about five years ago with former Morehead State University president, Dr. Morris Norfleet. He was working as a consultant to help other nations to develop their economies. He said that he had been invited to go with a team to Greece to help them, and, for some reason, had declined the request. Later, perhaps that night, he dreamed that a man from Greece was welcoming him to Greece at the airport in Greece as he stepped off the plane. Norfleet thus concluded that he should go. He said, “When I stepped off the plane in Greece, there was the same man, the man in my dream, welcoming me to Greece.”

Such dramatic things are rare, admittedly, but they do happen. In Romania some years ago, my friend Bob Jackson was preaching in Bucharest with his Interpreter by his side. A female listener had her gaze fastened upon the two men as they preached. Bob thought she was a Christian, she seemed so focused upon the message. So he asked her, and she said to him: “I am not a Christian, but last night I dreamed I was listening to an American and a Romanian on the same stage, speaking to a group that I was a part of. I came to this meeting, and I immediately recognized the two of you as the two men in my dream last night.” That night she trusted Christ as her Savior.

I remember witnessing to a Muslim woman and her daughter in Galati, Romania. She told me that she was a Muslim, and I explained to her that I was not speaking about religion, but about faith in Jesus Christ. When I mentioned His Name she became very excited and told me that her daughter had had a dream or a vision of Him coming down before her and telling her that He was the true Messiah and Savior. The daughter’s eyes

also brightened up and her expression was one of excitement and wonder. They both prayed to receive Jesus as their Savior.

God does work through dreams and visions. But no dream was so significant as the dream that saved America. Let us look at this dream, Paul's response to this dream, and the results of this dream.

LET US LOOK FIRST AT THE DREAM ITSELF: ^{AC 16:9} During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

This vision occurred during the night and came probably in the form of a dream. The man in the dream was *a man of Macedonia*. This man of Macedonia could easily have been a veteran of the Roman Army. The first place they preached in Macedonia was in Philippi. The *Zondervan Reference Bible* says: "During Roman times, the fame of Philippi stemmed from its having been the site of the decisive battle of the second civil war in 42 B.C., when Mark Anthony and Octavian (later Augustus) defeated Brutus and Cassius. After the war many Roman army veterans were settled at Philippi and the city was designated a Roman colony. Its government was responsible directly to the emperor and not made subservient to the provincial administration. Philippi's importance during the NT period, therefore, resulted from its agriculture, its strategic commercial location on both sea and land routes, its still functioning gold mines, and its status as a Roman colony. In addition, it had a famous school of medicine with graduates throughout the then-known world."

The man from Macedonia was European, for Philippi was an important city in Macedonia, named after Phillip, father of Alexander the Great. "Philip II of Macedon recognized the city's importance, and in 356 B.C. he established a large Greek colony there, changing its name from Krenides ("springs") to Philippi." In Paul's vision, the man from Macedonia was standing and begging Paul to come over to Macedonia and help them. The vision was an urgent message from God and an urgent appeal from man. The vision was to a needy situation. The vision was to go westward and not eastward, as the Holy Spirit had pressed them earlier, forbidding them to preach in the province of Asia, and guiding them westward.

As human beings, we are rebellious and sinful. We want to go our own way, do our own thing, follow our own logic, dream our own dreams. But that is not the way that God wants us to go. He wants us to be happy, to be sure, but above all He wants us to be productive. Look at Jesus' words: ^{JN 15:1} "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

JN 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Then we have the parable of the Sower: ^{Matt 13: 3} Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

God wants us to be productive; God wants us to be fruitful; God wants us to be successful as He counts success. You see, we need to respond to circumstances with the prayer, O God may thy will be done! Jesus prayed that and was crucified on a Cross, but He Arose! And because He lives, we live also, and will live throughout eternity!

Sometimes we are faced with difficult circumstances, and we contrive our ways of dealing with them. We must remember that “all things work together for good to them that love God, even to them that are called according to His purposes.” The surrender of our minds and hearts and our wills to God always results in the right decision, and always brings about fruitfulness for the Kingdom of God.

Last week the Retired Teachers met in our fellowship hall for their Thanksgiving Meal. While here, James Gayheart told us that our dream of a new building had worked out quite well. He was very complimentary of what he called our dream. Thank God we had such a dream, and I believe that by following the will of God the future holds great success for us, and great fruitfulness for the Kingdom of God. Our dreams are important. Paul’s Macedonian dream was the Dream that Saved America.

NOW LET US LOOK AT PAUL’S RESPONSE TO THE DREAM. We read that Paul immediately responded to this vision. *The Reference Bible* says, “Paul and his party responded to it at once (*eutheos*, “immediately”) by making preparations to leave for Macedonia. Such preparations would have required finding passage on a ship sailing for Neapolis.” They did not wait, for this was an urgent vision.

When Paul was saved on the Damascus Road, he had no idea of what the importance of his life would be. God kept revealing that to him. He went to Arabia to figure out what God wanted him to do. He then went to his hometown of Tarsus, one of the leading cities of Syria, and preached the Gospel there. Then he was invited to preach in the emerging church at Antioch. He was obedient at every step. At Antioch God called him into missions. On the first missionary journey, he knew what God wanted him to do. God had called him to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. God had called him to preach the Gospel to the lost of the world. Here, in the beginning of his second missionary journey, he is faithful to the will of God. Paul’s obedience to the will of God caused the early missionaries to conclude that “God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” I

cannot imagine Paul saying, “Well, after all, it was just a dream. I am going to be logical and not worry about this dream, this vision. Going to Macedonian is just a figment of my imagination. After all, it was just a dream.”

What if Alice Lloyd, the founder of Alice Lloyd College, had said that when she thought about starting a community center on Caney Creek in the place that Bige Johnson had given her? What if Columbus had said that about trying to find the East by sailing West? What if Joseph had said that about his dream of becoming the one to save his posterity? Dreams acted on have power, especially if those dreams come from the mind of God.

The *Zondervan Reference Bible* tells us:

“Authentic turning points in history are few. But surely among them that of the Macedonian vision ranks high. Because of Paul’s obedience at this point, the gospel went westward; and ultimately Europe and the Western world were evangelized. Christian response to the call of God is never a trivial thing. Indeed, as in this instance, great issues and untold blessings may depend on it.”

When we submit our wills to the will of God, God will use us to put His will into action. If you have a dream from Him, be urgent and put that dream into action. Your dream may not be as far-reaching as Paul’s dream, but only God knows how far reaching it might be.

NOW LET US LOOK AT THE RESULTS OF PAUL’S DREAM, A DREAM THAT SAVED AMERICA.

The first result was in the life of a young business woman named Lydia. Listen to God’s word: ^{AC 16:13} On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. ¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

Again the *Zondervan Reference Bible* says, “**13** In Jewish law, a congregation was made up of ten men. Wherever there were ten male heads of households who could be in regular attendance, a synagogue was to be formed (cf. *M Sanhedrin* 1:6; *M Pirke Aboth* 3:6). Failing this, a place of prayer (*proseuche*) under the open sky and near a river or the sea was to be arranged for.”

It is interesting and has been pointed out that even though the vision was a man of Macedonia, the first convert was a woman in Macedonia. Her name was Lydia. She was from Thyatira. She dealt with purple cloth that was dyed by a rather rare seashell that was crushed and used as dye. Because it produced a richer purple, and because the means of

getting such dye was so difficult, it was much in demand. Scholars think Lydia was quite a good business woman and probably quite wealthy.

But notice what the *Bible* says, “The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.” For some reason God wanted Lydia to be saved and to take the Gospel with her wherever she went in her business travels, and finally back to Thyatira where she would be extremely influential in the spreading of her faith and strengthening the new church there.

Her conversion was a quiet conversion. God opened her heart and she believed. This was an important result of the conversion of Lydia. And besides this, from a practical standpoint, the Church now had a home in Philippi, at the home of Lydia where the missionaries were housed during their time there.

The second result was of a young slave girl that brought her owners much gain. ^{AC 16:16} “Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” ¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her.” This slave girl was saved by having the evil spirit cast from her.

Luke calls the spirit she had the Python Spirit, or *pneuma pythona*. This snake spirit was related to the temple of Apollo. This incident got the preachers put in jail. But the incarceration did not stop them.

Next, one of the greatest conversions in the New Testament occurred.

^{AC 16:25} About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came loose. ²⁷ The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”

^{AC 16:29} The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

^{AC 16:31} They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.” ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Lydia was saved quietly when the Lord opened her heart; the slave girl was saved when the evil spirit was cast from her; and the Philippian Jailor was saved when an

earthquake shook the security out of him, and the Gospel put real Security in his heart and the hearts of family members. God was at work in Philippi! Lydia gave them a place to live; the slave girl got them put in jail; the Philippian jailor washed the stripes of Paul and Silas.

But the 'Dream that Saved America' was the dream that only started with Philippi. The 'Dream that Saved America' really started on Paul's first missionary journey, when he knew for a fact that God had appointed him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul's 'Dream that Saved America' started for us when it first reached Europe. But wave has followed wave until the Sea of God's Grace broke upon America. It has come through men like Paul the Apostle, John Wesley, Charles Finney, D.L. Moody, and a host of others. It has come from nameless frontiersmen and migrants and missionaries and evangelists. The *Gospel* that Jesus Christ is King of all Nations is the 'Dream that Saved America.'

And I remind you with fear and trembling that the only thing that can save America today is not our power, as great as that is, and not our soldiers, as brave as they are; rather, the thing that will Save America today is what saved America in the beginning. The 'Dream that Saved America' – God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself – Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved and your house – the dream that saved America is the Dream that Will Save America. But we must put that Dream into Action. May God help us to do it! Amen!