

Worship Material
Not all plain sailing
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 25th May

Begin with an opening prayer

Everlasting God, the one who knows all things,
we gather together to bring you praise.
We gather as your people,
knowing that we are often guilty of thinking
we know and can do all things.
Forgive us, Lord, and help us learn afresh today to follow you,
even into unexpected and uncomfortable places.
Amen.

Read Acts 16:9-15

Bible notes

Paul, Silas and Timothy were frustrated in their plans to travel either south or north, arriving instead in Troas, on the western shore of what is now Turkey. They accept this frustration as the work of the Spirit, and Paul's vision leads them to set sail for Philippi, in what is now Greece. His companions saw taking the gospel westward as God's will, emphasised by the sudden shift to the first-person plural: 'when he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over'. Perhaps Luke himself was present (see Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24), or perhaps the author is stepping into the narrative because his book is also an important witness, proclaiming good news by engaging its readers with these acts of Jesus' chosen witnesses.

We now hear of the founding of the first church in Europe, through the baptism of Lydia and her household. Lydia is a trader and householder of relatively high social status. She is 'a God-fearer', a Gentile who worshipped the God of the Jews, like Cornelius (10:2). Like the centurion who built a synagogue (Luke 7:5), she probably provided the Jewish 'place of prayer' in Philippi. She too had travelled from Turkey to Greece, reminding us of the ways in which the Church's mission was built on the economic, social and religious networks of the Roman Empire.

Lydia's heart is opened by God, just as the risen Jesus opened the disciples' hearts and minds (Luke 24:32,45). We note her eager listening, her baptism,

and her being judged 'faithful to the Lord' by the acceptance of an invitation to her home (v.15). This linking of belief, baptism and table fellowship, established at the first Pentecost (2:37-47), is integral to the commissioning of Paul (9:18-19) and is reiterated with the acceptance of the Gentile Cornelius and his household (10:44-48). It seems likely that Lydia functioned as the first leader of the church in Philippi, meeting in her home. From Paul's letters, we hear of churches in the houses of Aquila and Priscilla (Romans 16:3-5, 1 Corinthians 16:19) and of Philemon, Apphia and Archippus (Philemon 2).

Prayer

Lord of the Sabbath,
you are there for us whatever day of the week it is,
but you don't barge into our lives without permission.
Even though you always know what is best for us,
you wait patiently for us to come to you.
You want us to be still and listen.
And, when we do, wow, you amaze us with your loving kindness.
You call us to journey on through difficulties,
with us every step of the way.
We love you and worship you, O Lord.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

All-knowing God, go before us this week
and give us grace to see your handiwork.
Travel with us as we go through the ups and downs
that will come our way.
Lead us to be more like Jesus, loving those we meet with an
extravagant and unexpected love.

Amen.