

peace be with you

weekly devotional

from the desk of Rev. Marta Wheeler

SAINT PAUL BENSON

May 18, 2022

Deepening Faith

A sense of holiness imbues the
holy wanderers circling around
one tree
three times and then another.

Narrow strips of bark as long as a toddler,
carpet the tree base while burnt bare
branches point
courageously upward.

Each gazer has her own interpretation and
is satisfied that she knows what
the message
of the trees is for her spirit.

The next Sunday morning I see the deep
knowing in their eyes again as Psalms sung
in Hebrew
arise from heart to heart.

Soon cracks of thunder sink Yahweh's word
eternal into parched souls
yearning for
unity in God's presence.

This sense of immense holiness deepens
and we cannot deny God's
universal
faithfulness and love.

Acts 16:9-15

⁹ A vision of a man from Macedonia came to Paul during the night. He stood urging Paul, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" ¹⁰ Immediately after he saw the vision, we prepared to leave for the province of Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

Lydia's Conversion

¹¹ We sailed from Troas straight for Samothrace and came to Neapolis the following day. ¹² From there we went to Philippi, a city of Macedonia's first district and a Roman colony. We stayed in that city several days. ¹³ On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the riverbank, where we thought there might be a place for prayer. We sat down and began to talk with the women who had gathered. ¹⁴ One of those women was Lydia, a Gentile God-worshipper from the city of Thyatira, a dealer in purple cloth. As she listened, the Lord enabled her to embrace Paul's message. *Continued*

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Acts 16:9-15

¹⁵ Once she and her household were baptized, she urged, “Now that you have decided that I am a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house.” And she persuaded us.

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A Church Transformed

When the early Christian Church was forming, the power of the Holy Spirit was so strong. Paul, as well as the apostles who had personally walked the roads of Galilee with Jesus, listened to the messages that were given to them in vivid dreams. They went where they were asked to go.

In this case, Paul was convinced that God wanted him and their entourage to go to Macedonia. If he hadn't listened, he'd have missed out on meeting one of his biggest supporters and disciples of Jesus Christ. Lydia's heart was open to the message that he spoke.

In the poem above, I wrote about two spiritual experiences involving the Saint Paul congregation last week. You may have been in church last Sunday, or in the past when the Temple of Israel choir sang during worship. These powerful experiences stick with us and are reminders of our spiritual ancestry and that our connection to the Jewish people goes on.

We pray for you as you open your heart to the Spirit of God and receive the grace of forgiveness and love.

Marta

Rev. Marta Wheeler