

If you watched last night's Oklahoma City Thunder playoff game then you probably already know Dallas gave away shirts to each fan in attendance. It was a "white-out". Every single fan attending the game in Dallas received a white Mavericks shirt. The whole arena was all white. The Thunder did something similar when they were the home team during the first two games of the series. It's an impressive sight to see the entire arena all dressed in the same color.

Of course Thunder fans at the game in Dallas wouldn't want white Maverick shirts on. They would choose the exact opposite color. A whole sea of Maverick white stretches around their home arena, but if just one person wears Thunder blue they'll get noticed. What team you root for would certainly show.

As people become Christians for hundreds of years the Holy Spirit has been bringing faith into their hearts. People have come to understand Jesus as Savior and immediately they have faith. That miracle we can't see. But faith we can see, like Thunder blue in a sea of Maverick white. Luke writes in the book of Acts about this faith we can see...

### **A faith that shows**

I've only been to two continents. Traveling between continents seems like a much bigger deal than say driving to Kansas. On the western edge of what is Turkey today there was a town called Troas. This was one of the last cities on the map in Asia before you crossed into Europe, from one continent to the other. The apostle Paul passed through this town, although it wasn't his first choice. He wasn't thinking about changing continents, at least not yet. Paul wanted to push deeper into Asia Minor, go north into Bithynia, or east into Pontus. But the Holy Spirit was in charge of his itinerary. Paul was called by God to Macedonia, in Europe. It was a first for Paul and for Christianity.

Along the route Paul came to Philippi. **"We traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days."** Philippi wasn't the biggest, it wasn't the capitol, and it wasn't even the first city you came to. We don't know what Luke means here exactly but we do know this city became important to Paul. He would travel here a number of times, he would write them a personal letter recorded in the Bible, and he would be supported financially from the people in Philippi.

Paul made it his habit to start at a synagogue with the Jews and work his way to the Gentiles in a given location. Philippi didn't even have the required 10 Jewish males for a synagogue. It was a town heavy in retired Roman military. The word got to Paul that some Jewish women might be meeting along the river about a mile outside of town. There they might find a place of prayer. **"On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer."** Just like church every Sunday, Paul went out to find this place.

Pinpointing the first convert in our church isn't easy. Records might indicate who was confirmed first or baptized first. Some might know the first people to start the church but the first converted person is probably lost to history. Even in the ancient church most of those records are lost. But the first convert on the continent of Europe to Christianity is recorded in the Bible, right here. **"One of those listening was a woman named Lydia...who was a worshiper of God."** She's a Gentile woman who apparently had started following Jewish practices. She listened as Paul taught. He didn't try and stir the emotions like other preachers. He didn't need loud music or banging drums. He didn't preach with fire and brimstone. He simply preached Christ. The silent touch of the Holy Spirit went to work on her heart.

There are people in this world that are far more hesitant to listen than Lydia. There are some that want nothing to do with anything religious. You know them. You work with them, you workout with them, and you live with them. These people don't want to listen when God speaks. They don't have time to hear about Jesus. They don't know the impact that he has on their lives. They have locked off their hearts to God. Sometimes it's not that you know them, it's that you know you.

Having an open heart to hear the gospel message is not to your credit. You don't do it. You can't boast about it before God or any other person. An open heart to the gospel message is solely the work of a gracious and good God. But he never works without means. Notice he didn't come into Lydia's heart by accident. **"The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."** It was the message, that was what she responded to. The Word of God Paul preached. That's the Means of Grace. That's how the Holy Spirit creates faith. For us it's the same whether it be in three lessons of God's Word, the baptismal font, or the Lord's table these are the Means of Grace. Just last week you saw another child brought to faith through water and the Word. We receive Christ's true body and blood in the Lord's Supper for true forgiveness. The Holy Spirit is opening hearts, right here this morning. Faith in Christ is being created or strengthened through the Means of Grace.

Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from a Gentile city had probably never heard the gospel message before. Clearly Christ was coming through into her heart for the first time. It wasn't something she requested. It was graciously given to her by God. God graciously gives you the same thing. Lydia's life from that day forward, from that moment forward, wouldn't be the same again. Your life shouldn't be the same again either.

If someone picks up a book that falls from your arms you say...thank you. When your parents give you help on the homework assignment you say...thank you. If the store clerk lets you know about a deal going on you say...thank you. Reactions like these are immediate and appropriate. Lydia didn't hesitate either. **"When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home."** Lydia recognized the Holy Spirit working in her situation. She saw Paul as a messenger of God. Her faith was something to be thankful for, and her heart was moved to say thanks. She spontaneously wanted to show her new found love for the Savior.

When Lydia's new found faith asked, "What can I do for my Savior?" Paul couldn't just shrug his shoulders and say, "You want to invite us in but there's so much more that needs doing. That's not really going to help us." Acting like her thanks didn't mean anything might have left her faith permanently injured. Paul wasn't expecting anything but God gave him a blessing, a blessing of grace shown through the faith of Lydia. Paul encouraged that faith to continue to grow by saying yes to her invitation.

Spontaneous sanctification still happens today. Jesus lives, you believe it, and now you want to show it. Young Christians want to serve their Savior. People who believe in Christ want to exercise their faith and put it into action. They want to do great and wonderful things for their Savior. You are saints of God who have been brought to faith. But your sinful nature still struggles against you. It's a bitter struggle. It takes God to overcome. It takes a Savior who gave his life for you. It takes the Holy Spirit to work faith in your heart. But that faith will show.

Our sins have been washed away. We ask, "What can I do for my Savior?" Take Lydia, she served within her comfort zone by serving and hosting guests in her home. What possible simple gift inside your comfort zone could you use to serve your Savior? Can you play a musical instrument? Playing the best you can and practicing hard are works done out of faith in Christ. Do you have a chore that needs tending to? Getting right to it and doing it well without being yelled at is faith in action. Have you been blessed financially? Perhaps an offering to our youth trip to Tennessee or a donation to our audio fund is something you can do to put your faith into action. These aren't big but they aren't hard. They're simple; they're the kind of works of faith in action God wants to see.

Last night in Dallas a Thunder fan would have been in hostile territory, like Christians in the world are in hostile territory. The world is against Jesus, so the world is against you. Unbelievers all wear the same colors. But you stand out. You wear Jesus' colors. You wear it because God provided it for you, a robe of righteousness won for you by Christ Jesus. Faith has already been worked in your heart through the Word and sacraments of Christ. You are already doing and will continue to let that faith be a faith that shows.