



Links Players

Action Leads to Breakthroughs

On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. (Acts 16:3)

It's common to hear a tour player say he "found something" in a round, allowing for some quick success. Of course, everybody listening asks, "What exactly did he or she find?". That "something" isn't often explained and sounds elusive.

It's as if a mysterious discovery was made despite the regular hours of practice. Maybe it was an easily repeatable move or a fresh mindset. One can't be sure. Whatever the "something" was, it wasn't anticipated, and it led to a breakthrough.

Being involved with the Holy Spirit's work in the world is similar. It is more discovery than it is intention. While we are faithful in the small things—reading scripture, prayer, worship, sharing the good news with the lost—the Spirit's activity is less than predictable.

Jesus explained this to Nicodemus when he said that the Spirit is like the wind; "It blows where it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 4:8)

In Acts 16, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke intend to preach the word in the Province of Asia but are stopped by the Holy Spirit. They then try to enter Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit will not allow them to go there either. During the night, Paul has a vision of a man begging them to come to Macedonia. So Paul concludes that God wants them to preach the Gospel in Macedonia.

On the way to Macedonia, the group stops off at a Roman Colony—Philippi—where they stay for a few days. Luke reports what happened while in Philippi in Acts 16:

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. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. 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. (Acts 16:13-15)

Surprisingly, a providential encounter with Lydia would change all of Western civilization. Lydia was the first recorded convert to the Christian faith in Europe. She would go on to help anchor the first gentile church in Philippi. It would take only 300 years from the day of Lydia's conversion for the Gospel to reach

the entirety of the Roman Empire. The proliferation of the gospel in the gentile world began with the unplanned and unexpected conversion of a single gentile convert, Lydia.

If we hope to discover what God is doing in the world, we must take action, remain flexible, and surrender our expectations. We must routinely pray for lost friends, make ourselves available for those in need, and seek the Lord's will. Only when we act in faith will our eyes be opened to the Holy Spirit's dynamic activity in the world.

While a breakthrough in golf is exciting, participating in a breakthrough in Jesus' coming Kingdom is to taste eternity. When the Spirit moves, lives are supernaturally made new. And new people in Christ are the first steps to God's final aim—the restoration of all things. (Revelation 21:1-4).

Prayer: Lord, in my heart, I plan my way, but finally, you direct my steps (Proverbs 16:9). Open my eyes to your unseen work in the world so that I might participate in your plan to redeem the world.

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Boo Arnold

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