

## EVANGELIZING EUROPE

**“During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us’ ” (Acts 16:9).**

The D Day invasion of Europe on June 6, 1944 involved 20 battleships, dozens of cruisers, hundreds of destroyers, 13,000 aircraft, and 156,000 troops. The evangelization of Europe involved four men and a pocket full of seeds. The four men were Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke. The seeds were the truths of the Gospel that were not yet available in printed form.

The story began with a vision in the night. Since we must try the spirits to see if they are of God we assume that Paul and his companions carefully analyzed this vision to see if it came from God. Once they concluded that God was calling them they immediately set sail for Macedonia. The utter simplicity of it all is amazing.

Luke recorded what happened. By reading the book of Acts we find that nothing beyond the reach of every believer took place. There was no mass evangelism with thousands confessing Christ in a crowded stadium. That would be beyond what most of us are capable of doing. Rather it began with a small group of women meeting by the river for prayer. Talking to such a small group does not stretch our imagination at all. We are further encouraged to discover that the first convert was a woman named Lydia and that it was the Lord who opened her heart, not Paul (Acts 16:14). That’s how it all began. The evangelism of Europe did not require a large sum of money, a large team of workers, a large plan of action, or a large amount of talent. The power of the Gospel is in the Seed and not the one who plants it!

It is interesting to note that the first converts to Christ in Europe represent the rich, the poor, and the middle class.

- Lydia, the first convert, was rich. Her household also shared her wealth.
- The next convert was a demon possessed slave girl who owned nothing.
- Then came the conversion of the Philippian jailer and his household. We assume this family was middle class and neither rich or poor.

It is important to remember that planting seeds does not require a lot of talent. Even animals, birds, and children can plant seeds. It is also instructive that a massive harvest comes from individual seeds. Seeds grow one at a time and people are converted to Christ in the same way. We are not all the same size and shape like bricks, we are all unique in size and shape like stones. Each person, like a living stone, requires a special place in the temple of God (1 Pet. 2:5). The fact that 3,000 were baptized into Christ at Pentecost does not negate the fact that every convert came to Christ as an individual. Not one becomes a part of His Body until the Lord Himself verifies the validity of their faith. Then, and only then, are we added to His Body (Acts 2:47).

Just before being commanded to go into all the world we are told that some of the apostles “doubted” (Matt. 28:17). What did they doubt? Certainly they didn’t doubt the reality of Christ and His resurrection for He was standing right before them. Perhaps they doubted the same thing that we doubt. Even after reading how Europe was evangelized we are reluctant to believe that we could ever do such a thing.

For three years Christ had been constantly with His disciples. He was always there to give them comfort, encouragement, and direction. Now He promised to continue to be with them always, even to the very end of the age. Who can deny that Christ was with Paul as he brought the Gospel to Europe? Who can deny that Christ will also be with us if we choose to do His will? Aye! There’s the rub! We have a choice! We are created in the image of God and He grants us the privilege of choosing whether to do His will or not. Paul chose to obey, what will you choose?