

“GOD OPENS THE HEART”

The Conversion of Lydia

Acts 16:11-15

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INTRODUCTION

Paul saw the “Macedonian Vision” in Troas—a man from Macedonia standing and appealing to him saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” The preachers of the Gospel obeyed the direction of the Lord and immediately went across the Aegean Sea to Philippi—the first city of Macedonia on their new itinerary. And guess what? Their first preaching engagement was not to a Macedonian man, or even to a group of Macedonian men, **but to a bunch of women!**

What a surprise. There weren’t even enough Jewish men here in order to form a proper Jewish synagogue. They did find some ladies meeting in a place of prayer on the first Sabbath day in town. But, this is not likely what Paul and Barnabas had envisioned for this momentous event of crossing over into what is today Europe and preaching the Gospel here for the first time.

- How were they going to establish a church through preaching to a group of only women?
- Where would they find the required male leadership for elders?
- How successful could this mission be when preaching mainly to pagans and pursuing converts with them?
- Surely the Lord must have made some mistake in forbidding them to go to Asia—Ephesus, and to the large cities of Bithynia where there were large Jewish colonies and sending them to Philippi.
- Does God know what He is doing?
- Well, look at Phil. 1:3-8; 4:15-19
- This church was very special to Paul—closer to him than any other church; he spends no time rebuking them for false doctrines and evil practices.
- His only correction to them is that some ladies need to get along! (4:2-3)
- Note that the pastor issue is settled by leaving Luke behind to guide the fledgling work.

WHEN WE DO GOD’S WORK IN GOD’S WAY THE WORK ALWAYS PROSPERS UNDER HIS BLESSING.

In this passage we see how the Lord in His divine providence met every need of the divinely directed missionaries: **safe** and efficient journey, **salvation** of a significant soul, **supply** of a building and funds.

- I. GOD SPEEDS THE JOURNEY (11-12)
 - A. A straight and swift passage (v, 11; Cf. 20:6—five days)
 - B. A significant site for the first preaching ministry—Philippi (v. 12)
 1. The “first” city
 2. Macedonian city
 3. Colony
 4. Historical significance—Great battle there: Augustus and Antony def. Brutus & Cassius
 5. Situation on the Egnatian Way.

- II. GOD SAVES A SOUL (13-14)
- A. Searching out the place of prayer (13)
 - B. Speaking forth the Word of God
 - C. Seeking the soul of a business woman
 1. Her name: Lydia
 2. Her homeland—Thyatira (in Asia!), a Macedonian colony!
 3. Her occupation: seller of purple fabrics—very expensive; lucrative trade and in great demand; the special color of the Roman toga for government officials and soldiers
 4. Her religious status: “A God-fearer” —“proselyte of the gate” in Judaism
 5. Her interest in spiritual things—*she was listening intently*
 6. Her conversion by the Holy Spirit—“God opened her heart”
 - Note that the divine power works with the human interest: Divine sovereignty/human responsibility.
 - Once God “opened her heart” she responded.
 - Her response was to the Gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ.
 - The preacher was the Apostle Paul—whether the others participated or not (v. 13).
 - D. Sealing the transaction through believer’s baptism
 1. Notice that her “household” was also baptized.
 2. This undoubtedly included many of those assembled and listening to the message of salvation, her workers and servants.
 3. Although the head of the household sets a significant example and encourages the others to accept the gospel, each individual had to respond for himself.
 4. Baptism is the outward seal of the inward conversion—it expresses the official stamp of acceptance into the fellowship of believers, the outward testimony of the inward faith.
 5. **Notice that baptism had to follow conversion; it is important** as a matter of obedience.
- III. GOD SUPPLIES THE MEETING PLACE AND FINANCES (15)
- A. She had “been judged faithful.”
 - By the Lord’s acceptance of her through faith in Christ through the Gospel.
 - By the believers’ celebrating and commemorating her faith through baptism.
 - B. She now offers her home as a magnificent display of Christian hospitality.
 - Notice her “urging” of the preachers—exhorting strongly.
 - Notice her loving “pressure”—she prevailed upon us (cf. Lk. 24:29)
 1. Her house would be their lodging place—the inns were horrific!
 2. Her house would be the church’s meeting place—cf. v. 40
 3. Her financial resources would help support the church in its early days and beyond.

CONCLUSION

We have some significant lessons to learn here from both the Preachers and from the Disciples:

- **God blessed and directed the ministry of the Gospel**
- **God saved and used in service the lives of those who became disciples.**

So it *has been* in the past; so it *is* in the present, so *shall it always be* in the future.

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