

The Gospel for All Acts 16:9-40

Intro: Acts 16 is one of the most pivotal chapters in Acts. Just after the Jerusalem Council has welcomed Gentiles into the church, this chapter records Paul's second missionary journey; the closing of one door (6-7) and the opening of another (9) as the Gospel crosses the Aegean Sea and goes into Europe for the first time. (See **map** at the end of these notes)

By it, Paul and his party came to Philippi, and his ministry there was marked by three important conversions.

It is the video of the snapshot found in Galatians 3:28 – *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*

First: A Cultured Sinner (vv 13-15)

The heart of Lydia was a fertile field for the seed of the gospel.

- a) a business owner – 14 – seller of purple goods

Her native town, Thyatira, was famous for its purple dyed garments.

- b) a sincere person – 14 – a worshiper of God
- c) a prepared person – 14 – The Lord opened her heart
- d) a courageous person – 15 – she was baptized
- e) an influential person – 15 – and her household as well
- f) a serving person – 15 – come to my house and stay

Let's look at the two sides of salvation:

1 – The Divine Side

14 - The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul

Lydia is a prepared person –

There are many places in the Bible that our friends point to as reasons to dislike Christianity; the genocide of whole people groups like the Canaanites. We struggle with these issues also, although we do think the Scripture explains them. But, there are also places in the Bible that demonstrate the incredible love and amazing grace of God to people, the ultimate example being the cross of Jesus.

But here we see that *“The Lord opened her heart to pay attention what was being said by Paul...”*

Lydia is a Jew worshipping on the Sabbath at the river. This probably means there weren't 7 Jewish men in Philippi; the minimum number necessary to establish a synagogue. And of whatever number of people who were there, Luke directs our attention only to Lydia.

This takes us back to the Ethiopian eunuch (ch 8) and the Italian centurion, Cornelius in Caesarea (10).

What is important for us to note is that God's Spirit is working in the world to save people. This is encouraging to us and gives us confidence in evangelism.

Romans 1:5 - we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations...

Revelation 5:9 - you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation...

Revelation 7:9 & 10 – “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb....and crying with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God...and to the Lamb.’

Only God can open a human heart.... but this does not eliminate our responsibility –

2 – The Human Side

14 - The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul...

Matthew 28:19 - Go therefore and make disciples of all nations

Picture of Khurram with SOP -

God is not dependent on us. He can use donkeys, right? (Nu 22:22-40).

In salvation, both God and humans have a part to play. Our part is sinning and God's part is saving. Only a being who was both God and man could have undone the offense done by man to God.

But we do have the privilege and responsibility to share the Gospel and to rejoice when God adds to the church (Acts 2:47). It is not something we can ignore without detriment to ourselves as persons and as a church.

Just as the Ethiopian Eunuch is the first Ethiopian convert, so

Lydia becomes the first European convert.

Second: A Captured Sinner (vv 16-18)

Paul's life was one of extremes:

- Everywhere he went there was either a revival or a riot
- The slave girl and Lydia are extreme opposites

Lydia was at the top of the social scale and the slave girl is at the bottom.

- a) She is a physical slave – 16 – *slave girl*
- b) She is a spiritual slave – 16 - *had a spirit of divination*
- c) She is a fortune-teller – 16 - *fortune telling*
- d) She is a used girl – 19 – *her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone*

What annoyed (18) Paul about the girl?

For CG Leaders

16:17 - αὕτη κατακολουθήσασα τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ ἡμῖν, ἔκραζε λέγουσα, Οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι δοῦλοι τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου εἰσὶν, οἵτινες καταγγέλλουσιν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν σωτηρίας.

τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου =
the God. the most high

τοῦ = the

καταγγέλλουσιν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν σωτηρίας
they are proclaiming to you way salvation

Notice there is no definite article – ‘τοῦ/the’ – before the word, ‘salvation.’ Without the definite article, τοῦ = the, the girl is proclaiming ‘a’ salvation but not, ‘the’ salvation.

What ‘annoyed’ Paul was that the girl was not saying that there ‘the salvation’ is provided by God. It’s not just ‘a’ salvation. ‘A’ salvation won’t save anyone. Only ‘the’ salvation provided by ‘the’ most high God can save us.

This is why Paul responded, (18) – *“I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.”* And it came out that very hour.

And now....the riot begins!!! (19-24) This is what gets us into trouble. Christianity is exclusive to Jesus as the only salvation.

But any salvation separated from Jesus is no salvation. Not so for this girl, however –

e) She is a saved young woman – 18 – *And it came out that very hour*

Third: A Calloused Sinner (vv 19-40)

Lydia's conversion was private and quiet. The slave girl's salvation was public and dramatic. The jailer's experience will take place in a crisis. All three of these texts illustrate God's grace to all kinds of people, everywhere, in different circumstances. They all point us to individuals.

- a) a responsible man – 23 – *ordering the jailer to keep them safely*
- b) a scared man – 24 – *he put them in the inner prison* (no ventilation; darkness and heat, stench)
- c) a hardened man – 24 – *and fastened their feet in the stocks* (no bandage, no food)
- d) an honorable man – 27 – *he drew his sword and was about to kill himself*
- e) a fearful man – 29 – *trembling with fear he fell down...*
- f) a desperate man – 30 – *'What must I do to be saved?'*
- g) a changed man – 33 – *he took them...washed them...*
- h) a saved man – 33 – *he was baptized*
- i) an influential man – 33 (34) – *he and all his family*
- j) a serving man – 34 – *he brought them into his house*

Throughout the book of Acts, Luke emphasizes God's mercy and the lengths to which God will go to save people

- Philip and the Eunuch in the desert
- Cornelius, Peter, and two dreams
- Lydia in Europe rather than Paul in Asia
- One little enslaved, possessed girl
- An earthquake for the jailer

In each incident, God is drawing our attention away from the crowds to the individual.

*Every day they pass me by
I can see it in their eyes
Empty people filled with care
Headed who knows where
On they go through private pain
Living fear to fear
Laughter hides their silent cries
Only Jesus hears*

*People need the Lord, people need the Lord
At the end of broken dreams, He's the open door
People need the Lord, people need the Lord
When will we realize people need the Lord?*

*We are called to take His light
To a world where wrong seems right
What could be too great a cost
For sharing life with one who's lost?
Through His love our hearts can feel
All the grief they bear
They must hear the words of life
Only we can share*

*People need the Lord, people need the Lord
At the end of broken dreams, He's the open door
People need the Lord, people need the Lord
When will we realize that we must give our lives?
For people need the Lord, people need the Lord.*

- Greg Nelson / Phill Mchugh

Conclusion

The quiet, private conversion of Lydia, the public, dramatic conversion of the slave girl and the crisis experience of the jailer all demonstrate God's grace to people in various circumstances.

Each turns us from the crowd to the otherwise invisible person in the crowd and I've tried to emphasis the particulars about each person so that we 'see' them as they are.

Who is your 'invisible' person?

Community Groups:

1 – Can you list 1-3 things that are discouraging you right now?

2 – Can you list 1-3 things that are giving you joy right now?

3 – Take time to pray about all of these things.

4 – What did Paul want to do as Acts 16 opens?

5 – Where did God direct Paul instead?

6 – How does the Gospel in Europe in Acts 16 affect us in Northeast Tn today?

7 – What is the divine side of grace in Lydia's conversion?

8 – What is the human side of grace in Lydia's conversion?

9 – How are Lydia, the slave girl and the jailer all different?

10 – How are they all the same?

11 – Why might Paul be annoyed with the slave girl?

12 – Why do people become angry with Christianity's exclusivity about Jesus?

13 – Who might the 'invisible' person be in your life?

