

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Morning Service

Date 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Hymns Psalm 1 T (St Peter) 332, 289 Read: Acts 16:1-15

Text: Acts 16:13-15 Title The Conversion of Lydia

Series (4) Philippians.

The conversion of Lydia is a marvellous example of the sovereignty or absolute power of the Lord, in the saving of a sinner and all events that bring about that salvation.

Lydia was a citizen of Thyatira which was located in Asia, or Asia Minor as it really was. Thyatira itself became the home of the church, mentioned in Revelation Ch 2 & 3 as one of the seven churches of Asia.

Before, the conversion of Lydia, the church of Thyatira in Asia did not exist, the reason being the Gospel had not yet been preached in Asia.

Paul & the missionary team had a burden to preach the gospel in Asia, but **Acts 16:6** says they – “**were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia.**”

At this point in their ministry it was not the Lord's will to have them go into Central Asia.

The Spirit of God guided Paul & the team, directing them to Philippi, a city of Macedonia, in what is now Eastern Europe.

But notice here the marvellous providence of God. While God guided their steps away from Asia to Europe, yet unknown to them, at the same time He had brought a woman to Europe from Asia, in order that she would hear the gospel and be converted to Christ.

When the missionary team arrived in Europe, this woman, Lydia from Thyatira was already living in Philippi.

God had wonderfully arranged her times, so that she was living in the very place she would hear the Gospel.

It is interesting to note, that Lydia already seemed to have some knowledge of the truth.

We are told that she “**worshipped God**” the sense being, that Lydia, a Gentile, a heathen, had come to the worship God.

We are given no information when this woman got involved in the Jewish religion, but these verses show that she attended the prayer meeting at the riverside in Philippi.

This gathering for prayer on the Sabbath was most likely the only Jewish witness in Philippi.

It was the custom for Paul, on his missionary journeys, so seek out the Jewish synagogue but since there was none, they attended prayer meeting in Philippi. During their time there they came into contact with Lydia.

While Lydia was a worshipper of God & was present at this public prayer meeting by the riverside, **she was not a believer in Christ; she was not right with God.**

Lydia represents so many who regularly attend places of worship. They have a head knowledge of the gospel, but they have no heart knowledge of the gospel. They know it, but they have never applied it to themselves.

Remember, in **Acts 26**, as Paul is testifying of Jesus Christ as his Saviour, the one who loved him and gave Himself for him.

Paul speaks to King Agrippa, “**For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. <sup>28</sup> Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.**”

Here was a man who knew the truth in his head, but had not known it in his heart.

And while it's better to be in God's house and hear the word, yet this is not enough. One can worship God, associate with Christians & yet be lost.

The gospel must be applied personally for the saving of the soul.

**CHS soap.**

### **I FIRST, THE MANNER OF HER CONDUCT**

As we are introduced to Lydia, we learn of a woman who lived a moral life.

Lydia was a businesswoman, a "***seller of purple.***" The city of Thyatira was famous for its trade. She did her work to the best of her ability in order to provide for her household.

What strikes us about Lydia is her conduct, Religious behaviour. though unsaved, yet she had principles.

We can sum up Lydia's conduct, her behaviour as this- Lydia was religious yet her heart was closed to God.

**She was principled but not pardoned,** isn't that astonishing.

Notice, in the sabbath day she was found "***by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made.***" She knew it was right to worship God on the sabbath day.

In fact in due to sinners attending the prayer meetings in some of congregations, many of them came to faith in Christ. Dr Cairns.

When I ministered in Lewes, there was an unsaved lady, who attended the services and prayer meetings, she came out of principle, she claim to worship God, but there was no saving grace in her life.

I encourage sinners on the Lord's day, the sabbath, keep attending the place of worship as you need to hear the gospel. Oh believer be in the place ***where prayer was wont to be made.***"

So many wonderful things could be said about this dear lady. Lydia did so much outwardly. Her motives were right, providing for family, coming to publicly worship God, But, she lacked one thing, **Christ in her life.**

Lydia **was religious, but not redeemed.**

With all her religion & outward form of worship, Lydia's heart was naturally shut, closed to God's way of saving grace.

This is the natural state of the human heart. The sinner's heart is open to sins pleasures, delights, type heart accepts and accommodates all kinds of activities, and Religious ways.

but due to the depravity, deadness, dominion and defiance of sin, the heart is shut to God and His only way, the truth of the Gospel, Christ Himself.

Lydia worshipped God, but not in truth. She worshiped God publicly, outwardly, seen of others, but not inwardly with a heart given over to God.

There are many who claim to worship God, but they do not worship Him in truth because their heart closed to God, that means the heart is far from God.

The Saviour Himself spoke to those he called Hypocrites, in **Matt 15:8** "***This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from***

**me.**” Those words are Striking. You may sing the hymns, say prayers, but your heart is closed, it is far from God saving truth.

The **Ps 145:18** “**The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.**” The Saviour said in **John 4:24** “**they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.**” Lydia worshipped God but not in truth.

The only way to worship God in truth, is to worship Him through His Son Jesus Christ on the basis of the blood shedding at Calvary.

It is to enter into His presence not, in any merit of our own, that is what we can do, my good works, my own conduct.

No, we can only approach God on the ground of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

God will only accept sinners on the ground the substitutionary death on cross. John preached **Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.**

The truth of God’s word, setting forth Jesus Christ as the only substitute for sinners, that will set sinners free from bondage.

## **II SECOND, THE MOMENT OF HER CONVERSION**

When Paul noticed the gathering in prayer, he took his seat on the river’s bank, and then he communicated the gospel unto them.

He had but one subject, and that was Christ; the Christ who had met him on the way to Damascus, and changed his heart;

the Christ who was able still to save; the Christ who died upon the cross, to bring sinners to God, and cleanse them in His blood;

the Christ in heaven, interceding for sinners; the Christ waiting to be gracious.

If Lydia was ever to worship God a right, she needed her heart to be opened.

In other words she need to be converted. A change needed to take place in her heart. A turning away from a self righteousness, and self religious life, but a turning in faith to Christ alone.

The reference to the heart being opened points to that which belongs to the spiritual realm.

It is not getting better, trying something new or turning over a new leaf.

Rather, it is spiritual life that never existed before. a new heart spiritually with Desires to worship God His way.

This opening in view is a description of the new birth. The New birth is the act of God's Spirit by which new life, spiritual life is created in the heart of man.

such a work of the opening of the heart, could not be done by Lydia herself. We don't read she opened her own heart. Nor could it be done by Paul or the missionary team.

No, but such a work could only be done by the Lord opening her heart through the ministry of His word, by the work of the Holy Spirit, applying the word to the heart.

Therefore, the opening of the heart, is a spiritual act altogether.

The same picture is recorded in **Mark 7:34, 35** were we read this time about a man whose ears were closed, he was physically deaf, he could not hear. Physically his ears were closed, but also spiritually.

The Lord Jesus touched this mans ears and he could hear.

you see, Only Christ could open this man's ears, for they were totally closed.

The very fact no one else could open the man's ears revealed, it was a work only God could do.

Others could tell the man -ears open- but for their claim to be true the man would need to hear. So they were proved false. But Christ said, be opened and he could hear. He made the change.

If I said to you I forgive your sin, there should be no change in your life, but when Christ speaks He touches and transforms their life.

When Paul sat down and presented the gospel message to the other woman, Lydia listened and responded to the gospel call as spoken by Paul. Her heart was opened by the Lord.

The word "**opened**" is a very intensive word. It means **to open up completely**. It is immediate, One moment her heart was closed now it was opened. God's intention was that Lydia would be saved.

Note again the emphasis on hearing the Word of God in connection with the new birth. **Verse 14** tells us that "**Lydia ... heard.**" She heard the Word – **verse 13b**, "**we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither.**" Moreover, notice, the order – Lydia "heard" & then her "heart" was opened.

The mind addressed & the heart reached as a result.

There was a softening of her heart. The Lord, by His Spirit conquers the heart & prepares the way for His entrance into it.

**Verse 14** informs us that "**she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.**" The words demonstrate that her heart was opened as she responded to what Paul was preaching.

She wanted to catch every word and so she listened carefully to the word of salvation. Lydia had grasped the truth. Her heart was so opened that she attended to the gospel so as to accept it.

There was no hesitating. She believed what Paul said; that Jesus is the Son of God, and whosoever believes on Him would be saved. She was immediately pardoned.

The Lord opens up the heart by His own power, causing the sinner to respond.

*Lydia like any* Sinner are given a willingness to have Christ as Saviour. **Ps 110:3**, "**Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power.**" Willing to submit to the law of Christ the King. He enters the heart bringing with Him His law which He writes upon the heart – she accepted the gospel, she embraced the gospel.

Lydia was now, a new creature. God had been dealing with her. It was not an accident she came to the prayer meeting. God was in control. He would bring her to hear the gospel. He saved her that day.

### **III THIRD, THE MANIFESTATION OF HER CHANGE**

The words before us indicates the change in Lydia was clearly manifested, seen, immediately upon the opening of her heart.

Lydia was led by the Spirit to obey the word, and confess her faith. she was not a silent believer. You did not have to guess or try and find out.

Notice her expression in **verse 15** "**if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord.**" in other words, Lydia is now "a believer in the Lord." The sense of her words is that Paul & the missionary team seen she become a believer.

What wonderful words when people can see the work of Grace in your life.



She was not ashamed to confess Christ, She identified with the people of God, as her people.

This is what the grace of God does. **Rom 10:10** “***For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***”

As a mark or sign to declare publicly her heart was opened by the Lord, **v15** “***And when she was baptized and her household.***” It was a visible sign to show an inward work.

**But I want to focus on the order.** First, Lydia was saved, then she was baptised.

So many have the order reverse, **they get baptised first, in order to be saved.**

The scripture teaches Baptism does not save. The name for such error is called **baptismal regeneration.** Salvation is having the Lord open your heart.

Furthermore, her desire was to fellowship with other believers. She became an enthusiastic Christian. Her desire was to see the work of God progress. “***Come into my house & abide there.***” ***And she constrained us.***” What a sign of an opened heart

Lydia wanted to be in the company of God’s people & have fellowship with them. Her desire was to grow in grace, to know more of Christ.