

# Acts Ch16v11-15 - Good News Story

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[ 0 : 00 ] 1112. That's the page number. So it's great to hear Avian's story this morning. Love to hear that.

But I just had to question the beginning as Avian began. She said, I'm not used to public speaking. Well, I and my wife travelled with Avian six hours to Derry for a wedding.

And I can say Avian is well used to public speaking. Not a problem at all. And if you want to take a journey and you don't want it to be boring, take Avian with you.

And she'll supply you with good conversation and lots of goodies as well. So we're going to read from Acts chapter 16, starting at verse 11. It's a very short account.

True story. It's the Apostle Paul and some of his companions are travelling. And they meet a lady called Lydia. So we're going to read from verse 11 through to verse 15.

[ 1 : 28 ] From Troas, so this is north-west Turkey. From Troas, we put out to sea and sailed straight for Sermothrace, which was a group of islands in the Mediterranean.

And the next day we went on to Neapolis, which is modern-day Greece. From there we travelled to Philippi, which was about ten kilometres inland, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia.

And we stayed there several days. On the Sabbath, the holy day for the Jews, we went outside the city gate to the river where we expected to find a place of prayer or to find people who would gather together to pray.

We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those who was listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth.

And she was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us to her home.

[ 2 : 54 ] If you consider me a believer in the Lord, she said, come and stay at my house. And she persuaded us. Well, I'm going to pray and ask God to help us as we look at his word together.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this true account, recorded for us, written down for us to read today. And we pray that you would help us to understand what it's teaching us and how it applies to us and that we would respond in a way that is good for us and pleases you.

Amen. Well, we all love a good news story, don't we? And that's what we have in this text in our reading this morning.

We meet a lady called Lydia who's heard some good news and it changes her life. In fact, it's the same good news that Avine has heard and changed her life too.

So three things we're going to look at from this short reading. We're going to look at a good news message, a heart-opening experience, and a life-changing response.

[ 4 : 23 ] So a good news message, a heart-opening experience, and a life-changing response. So first, a good news message.

Look at verse 13 with me. On the Sabbath, Paul and his companions went outside the city gate to the river where we expected to find a place to pray.

And we sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. I'm sure there was perhaps the usual, hello, how are you, my name is, what's your name, where do you come from, what do you do, and so on and so forth.

But there's something specific here, isn't there? He's speaking to the women. What was he talking about?

What was his message? What did he have to share with them? Well, if we go back just a couple of verses to verse 10, in the lead-up to this account, we're told that Paul had a vision.

[ 5 : 31 ] And we read in verse 10, after Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

You see, Paul was not on a lovely big yacht, on a luxurious Mediterranean holiday, sailing all around the Greek islands to sun himself.

No, Paul was on a mission, sent by God, to preach the gospel. Now, the gospel is one of those words, it's a summary term, for a good news announcement.

A good news announcement. And there are three things about this gospel message. First, it's good news, and not a vice.

The gospel is not religious advice about how to be a better person. Every religion in the world gives advice. You must do this.

[ 6 : 39 ] You must do that. You've got to stop doing this, and stop doing that, and achieve this. Well, the gospel is completely the opposite. It's a good news announcement that we have been rescued or saved.

So it's a good news announcement, not advice. Second, it's good news of salvation. Look, if I were going out today and having a walk by the sea and the wind and the rain and got blown off into the water, I would need saving.

That means, if I stay where I am, I'm in danger. I need to be rescued. Now, the good news message is that we can be rescued from the danger we're all in.

You say, well, Johnny, what kind of danger am I in? Is the roof going to suddenly blow off this building? No, I hope it's not going to do that. The Bible actually makes it very clear what it is.

We're facing God's promised judgment. Just flick on a page. I think it'll just be a page in your Bible to Acts chapter 17.

[ 8 : 06 ] So that's the big 17 and then the smaller verse 31. Acts 17 verse 31.

This is a little bit later on in Paul's travels as he continued to share the gospel, the good news. So in verse 31 it says, He, for he that is God, has set a day, and we don't know when that day will be, but he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.

Well, who's that? Who's the man who's going to judge the world? Well, he has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.

That person is the Lord Jesus Christ who is going to judge the world with justice. Now that's both a good news thing because we want justice to be done, but it's also a danger because, well, we too will be judged.

Just look at our world and our lives and we can see that all is not well. The war in Ukraine and Gaza, the fallout between nations, the divisions that remain on the north of our islands.

[ 9 : 31 ] But also, when we look into our own lives, we see breakdown in our own relationships, we're selfish in our attitudes, we're not at peace, there's an inner turmoil.

So the problem isn't always out there. The problem is in here, in my heart. That's what puts us in danger.

Listen to what Avine said. This is a quote from her story. She says, the problem was I was bad and I knew I was bad.

It's not that I didn't want to be good. I tried, but I kept on failing and I knew I was not good enough to go to heaven on my own merit. I needed a saviour.

Avine recognised she needed a rescuer. You see, this world that we live in belongs to God. He made it, he owns it. And he wonderfully made you and I and made us the way we are, unique and beautiful.

[ 10 : 38 ] And that means he owns us as well. And God isn't going to let us go on ruining our lives and the world in which we live. He's promised to come and bring justice.

A judgement that will be fair and right and will see us separated from God and all that is good. But the good news is that we are saved, rescued from that judgement.

We are rescued from danger. Well, how are we rescued? Well, the third point is this.

It's good news about Jesus. You see, the good news message here today is not stop being bad, Avine, stop being bad and start being good.

No, it's a good news message about Jesus, our Saviour, who's come to restore our broken lives and renew our disordered world.

[ 11 : 45 ] And he is the one who has achieved the salvation for us. And he's done it in two ways. By his death on the cross and his resurrection from the grave.

He saves us first by his death. when Jesus died on the cross, when he was nailed to the cross, he was taking the judgement that we deserve.

I want you to imagine that this blue covered book that I have here is, well, let's take Avine since Avine's getting baptised. This is a record of Avine's life.

Everything you want to know about Avine from the moment she was born until the day she dies, everything is recorded in this book. Fascinating reading.

It would go off the shelves, no problem at all. All the good things Avine has ever done are written down. Everything she's ever thought, anything she's ever said, are all here.

[12:50] All her great public achievements, all those medals that she's won and all those plaques for gymnastics and everything else, all there, all the great things that she loves to tell people about, but also the private things, the things that nobody else knows about.

It's a bit like our record too, isn't it? And it means that this record of us stands between us and God. And if God is going to judge, it will be judged by the record of our life and we will not stand. So that's one book, I want you to keep that in mind.

The second book is this, I want you to imagine that this orange covered book is a record of the life of Jesus Christ. That everything Jesus did and said and thought is all recorded here, from his life to his death and beyond, everything written down.

All the things he did as a child, in the carpenter shop where he worked with his father, as he went about. But you know what, as you read through the record of Jesus' life, you won't find one thing that he ever said or did or thought that was wrong, that was bad.

[14:15] Could you imagine? I mean, we look at our own lives or maybe you have children, we don't have to tell them to be naughty. why is it that they just are naughty?

And why do I, no matter how many times I'm told, I'm naughty? Because I'm not good, I have a heart problem. So, but Jesus' life is perfect.

So that's what happens on the cross. We've got our life and the record here and the life of Jesus.

And what happens is there's an exchange. Jesus takes my record to himself and the judgment falls on him and he's punished in my place.

But more wonderfully than that, the record of Jesus is transferred to my life so that when God looks at me, he sees the record of Jesus' life which is applied to my life.

Isn't that wonderful? that's why it's called a good news story. The death of Jesus rescues us. And so does his resurrection because when Jesus died, he didn't stay dead, he rose from the grave defeating death and giving eternal life.

[15:42] You see, none of us can escape death. One day, sadly, it will come to us all, every one of us in this room. And the most painful thing about death, well it separates us from those we most love, our friends and our family.

But most of all, it separates us from God. But Jesus, when he died, he was placed in a grave and three days later he was raised again to life.

He crushed death to life, to death. death. He destroyed death for us so that we might have life forever. That is a good news message.

A message of salvation through Jesus. Listen again to what Avin said. This is a quote from her story.

She says, God sent his son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross and take the punishment that I deserved for my sins, so that I could now be counted as holy and righteous before God.

[16:57] So, that is a good news message. Next, a heart-opening experience.

Look at verse 14 with me in the story. Verse 14. One of those listening to this great gospel good news message was a woman from the city of Thyatira, which was back in Turkey.

Her name was Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. Now, purple cloth was a very expensive item. You had to have a lot of money if you had purple cloth.

So, in some ways, Lydia was a fashion designer, a fashion seller. So, anything just, I mean, look at Avine in her designer fashion today. That kind of purple cloth.

And it tells us as well that Lydia was a worshipper of God. We might call her a God-fearing woman. Lydia was a very devout religious person.

[18:02] She would say her prayers and she would do good things. She was the kind of person where Lydia never ever missed church. She was always there. But here's the point.

It seems Lydia didn't know anything about Jesus. In fact, it seems she never heard about Jesus. But when she heard the gospel message from Paul, as he taught it, something dramatic, something extraordinary took place in her life.

Do you see what it was? Look at the rest of verse 14. Look what happened when she heard the message. The Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to Paul's message.

As the message was shared, God was working in her life. God opened her heart to believe the message.

God is God opened. God opened, we're not talking in a physical sense, but a spiritual sense.

[ 19 : 13 ] And it means at least two things. If God opens your heart, it first means that God enables you to see your need of salvation.

salvation. You might respond and say, well, Johnny, you know what, I don't need rescued. If you knew my life, you would know that I'm not really a bad person.

I live a good life, I'm kind to my friends, I love my family. I'm not perfect, but I'm certainly not in the category of Putin or the Israeli commanders.

I'm not like that. But look at Lydia. Lydia, she was a worshipper of God, a religious person, very devout.

So if there was one person who didn't need rescued, well, it has to be Lydia, doesn't it? But yet God had to open up her heart to see her need of salvation.

[ 20 : 13 ] Yes, it's true, even Lydia, a good person, needed to be saved. You see, left to our own assessment, we will always think of ourselves more highly than we ought.

We have those inner arguments, don't we? And why is it that we always come out on the right side, and everybody else is always wrong? You see, we need God to open up our eyes to enable us to see just how desperate we need to be saved.

We need God to open up our hearts. And the second thing that it would mean is that God enables us to trust Jesus for salvation.

Again, we might respond and say, well, you might trust in Jesus, but I'm going to trust in me. Jesus might be one way, but I'm sure there's lots of other ways.

I can manage to save myself. We always back ourselves to rescue ourselves out of trouble. Well, no. Listen to what the Apostle Peter said.

[ 21 : 34 ] It comes a little earlier in Acts. Speaking about Jesus, he says, salvation is found where? In no one else.

For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. It's only Jesus.

Left to our own choice, we will always choose someone else or something else. But we need God to open up our hearts to see that we need him to rescue us.

So how can I, how can we have the same experience as Lydia in this story? Well, we need to ask God to humbly come before God and say to him, please show me my need of salvation.

Enable me to trust Jesus for salvation. Listen again to Avine's story. This is what she says, Miraculously, God still loved me.

[ 22 : 46 ] He loved me so much that he wanted to save me, so he did. Just like that. He just saved her.

You see, this is all good news. God opened Lydia's heart, he opened Avine's heart, he can open my heart, he can open your heart. There is not one person that God cannot work in.

So what are we going to do about all this good news? Well, very quickly, a life-changing response.

You see, all this good news, this wonderful message, demands a response from each one of us.

For Lydia, it was a response that changed her life, and a response that Avine is given that has changed her life too.

But what are those responses? First, Lydia believed. The belief isn't just simply a belief, oh yeah, this is true, but it was a belief in a person.

[ 23 : 57 ] Have a look with me just a little bit later on. Paul, the same chapter, and verse 30.

Because as Paul went about sharing this good news, some people weren't happy with him, and he ended up in prison for talking about the gospel, the good news.

And something extraordinary happened. And the jailer who was looking after them cries out to Paul. Do you see it at the end of verse 30? This is what he shouts out.

He said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they replied, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.

Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him, that is the gospel, to all the others in the house. Do you see that? What must I do to be saved?

Believe in the Lord Jesus. That means entrusting your whole life to Jesus. It's believing that you need him for salvation.

[ 25 : 12 ] It's believing that when Jesus died, he died for me. It's trusting that when Jesus was raised from the grave, he was raised for me. Again, listen to Avin.

She says it so well. it was only by faith in God's grace that I would be saved. So I put my trust in my saviour Jesus, who did what I could never do.

Lydia heard the good news message and she believed. But there was one other response, wasn't there? Back to our story.

She didn't just believe. Look at verse 15. When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us to her home.

She was baptised. Now, we need to be very clear about this. Baptism is not something you do to be rescued. So Avin's going to go into that tank over there in a little while.

[ 26 : 21 ] It's not going to save her. There's nothing magical about that water or anything else. No, it's an outward public demonstration of an inward reality, of a change that's taken place in her life.

It's a powerful picture of Avin's faith in the Lord Jesus. So in the act of baptism, two things are going to happen.

Avin will go down into the water and as she goes down into the water she's declaring that a death has taken place for her.

Avin is announcing through her baptism that when Jesus died all those years ago he died for me.

And then second as Avin comes out of the water Avin your dad Jim told me to leave you down a little bit for a little while but we will bring you up as we bring up Avin out of the water she is declaring that a resurrection has taken place for her that when Jesus was raised from the grave he was raised for Avin you see baptism is symbolizing an end of an old life and the start of a new life Avin is saying I'm no longer going to live for self I'm no longer going to trust in Avin no I'm going to live a new life to live for Jesus and I'm going to trust in him remember the book who has the perfect record given to me so

I can live for him baptism by itself will not save rather it is a wonderful public demonstration to friends to family to all who are gathered of her belief in the Lord Jesus Christ this is a good news story that has changed Avin's life no she's not perfect you heard her say she still messes up and still fails but she's trusting in the one who will keep her let me finish with a quote from Avin's story she says I fail every day but he that's God renews my strength I can go to him and say sorry and ask for forgiveness when I fail and turn again to him and know that I will not be turned away because my relationship with God is not dependent on me or my work but on

[ 29 : 10 ] Jesus' death and resurrection this good news changed Lydia's heart changed Avin's life and can change any one of us as we trust in him that is a good news story amen let me pray father father god we thank you so much for this true account of Lydia's life and we thank you for the way it reflects and mirrors Avin's life thank you that she got to hear the good news thank you for opening Avin's heart so that she could trust you and thank you for Avin's response of trust and of being baptised today and we pray that all of us here may walk in the same path and trust you too we ask we ask this in

Avin is going to get baptised in just a few minutes and before that happens we're going to sing our final song together again this is one that has been chosen by Avin if you see the first line there when I fear my faith will fail and the point is we do but the good news is Christ will hold me fast it it for it can it you