

A Christian but not Saved!

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[0 : 0 0] Well, let's turn briefly to Acts chapter 16, and we're reading at verse 11, looking at this passage, verses 11 to 15, and especially the reference here to Lydia and what she came to experience on this particular day in her life as the Lord opened her heart.

Verse 14, one who heard us was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

And after she was baptized and her household as well, she urged us, saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay. And she prevailed upon us.

It's interesting the way that this visit to Philippi on the part of Paul and Silas goes back to the dispute that arose between himself and Barnabas involving Mark in the previous chapter that we read.

And, well, it just shows us, of course, that even the apostles sometimes had disagreements and had to actually hear part company so that they went their different ways.

[1 : 1 9] But the Lord's providence in that overruled it, of course, and here is the result of it from Paul and Silas' point of view. They came to Philippi. Now, you remember in the Second World War that D-Day was the establishing of what you might say was a beachhead on the mainland of Europe.

The war had reached the stage where in order to try and gain final victory over the Nazis and all who were helping them, it required this massive invasion and all the organization that went with it so as to establish a beachhead coming to these beaches in Normandy that, because of that, became so famous.

And despite all the casualties, still the Allies got their beachhead, they established a beachhead there, they established a foothold, if you like, on the mainland of Europe, from which they could then work through towards the final overthrow of the enemy.

And that's really what's happening in a spiritual sense here in this passage. Because this is really the gospel reaching into Europe. Paul and Silas have just come from Asia Minor, across the Aegean, and they've landed here and made their way to Philippi.

This is the first instance, certainly that we know of in the Bible, the first instance of the gospel reaching what we know as the mainland of Europe today.

[2 : 5 8] So you could say that Lydia is the first European convert. She came from Thyatira, which wasn't in this region of Philippi, but nevertheless, as she was living there in Philippi, within the work that she did, she came here to be the first convert in Europe, the first European convert, you might say.

Paul was called there in a vision, of course, as we see in the previous verses. He came over as he saw this vision, a man of Macedonia calling him over, come over to Macedonia and help us.

And they reached Philippi, having responded to that, they saw that the Lord was calling them to preach the gospel there. It wasn't where they themselves first had wanted to go, but that was something that the Lord prevented.

So this is where they came. Now, Philippi was a major center. It was a Roman colony. It was actually a capital of that district that the Romans had made for themselves under their control.

And it appears there was no synagogue. Paul's practice, as you know, was firstly, wherever he went with the gospel, he made for the synagogue. He made for where there would be a Jewish gathering, people who knew the Old Testament scriptures, and he would present Christ to them in that way.

[4 : 20] But he's now coming into Gentile territory. He's gone to people who are not Jews. He's taking the gospel out with the Jewish people and into hostile Gentile territory.

Not that the Jews weren't hostile as well, but he's come into this area. So it doesn't appear that there was a synagogue at all in Philippi. It was a large town or city. Because a synagogue, to establish a synagogue, required a minimum of 10 male Jews.

You couldn't establish a synagogue otherwise. And in places like this, where there was no synagogue formally for people to meet for worship, they met. They had a place usually established by a riverside, because the Jews had a need of water for their various washings that they had in the rituals.

And that's probably why this place here was established as a place of prayer, a place of religious worship beside the river, where Paul and Silas found these women.

It says here, where we supposed that it was a place of prayer. The old AV has come into our parlance, where prayer was wont to be made.

[5 : 34] These are words that we often quote or hear quoted in prayer. But the idea is that it doesn't necessarily mean that Paul and Silas knew that this was a place of prayer. They may have come to know that.

There have been a few days in Philippi. But certainly they knew that it was a likely place, when there was no synagogue, that by the riverside there would likely be a place where they would meet some who were gathered there to worship.

And that's where they came and found this group of women. So here's a rather strange thing. Here is the vision that he had this man of Macedonia, as you see there in verse 9, a man of Macedonia standing there urging, come over to Macedonia and help us.

And when they got to Macedonia and to Philippi, they found that the man was actually a group of women. But he preached to them. And it was from that, that the church in Philippi was established.

And indeed, it would be worthwhile, and we may do that actually, if the Lord directs us to that. We may look at, we're certainly going to look at the Philippian jailer, as another instance of conversion later in the chapter.

[6 : 41] But this slave girl, who is between the conversion of Lydia and the conversion of the jailer, we could take it that because it's recorded there, as well in that context, that it looks likely that she was converted as well.

But in any case, Lydia and the Philippian jailer certainly became the foundational members of the church in Philippi. Now, if you and I had been sent to Philippi and said by God, choose people out of the population of Philippi in order to establish a church and to have a foundation there, you probably certainly wouldn't have gone to the Philippian jailer.

You might have gone to Lydia. She was a respectable woman. She was a business woman. But then that's not God's way, is it? A slave girl, a man who looked after the jail, a rough, heathen, pagan.

Yet these were the people God changed to establish his own church in Philippi. That's God's way. He doesn't look at things the way human beings look at things.

His wisdom is not the same as our wisdom. And this is the way that God went about it. So here is this woman, Lydia. Now, the first thing we noticed about her was she was a worshiper, but she was not saved.

[7 : 58] She was not a Jew. In all likelihood, she came from Thyatira. And she had accepted the Jews' religion. There were quite a lot of people who weren't born as Jews who had come to accept the Jews' religion.

And they were regarded by the Jews as proselytes. They were not Jews by birth. But because they had adopted the Jewish religion, they were known as worshipers in that sense.

So you could say that she was a worshiper. She belonged to those people that gathered there regularly to worship. So in that general sense, she was a worshiper.

She obviously wasn't saved because her heart was not yet open. Something needed to be done to bring her into a knowledge of Jesus, a knowledge of salvation in Christ.

And that's what happened as Paul preached, as Paul spoke to them, to this group of women, and as we'll see, that's what happened. In that sense, she was a worshiper, but she wasn't saved.

[8 : 58] Now, you can use the word Christian in that same sense today. We more often than not use the word Christian to describe someone that is really converted, someone that's known to follow the Lord, someone that is saved or professes to be saved.

And we quite often ask the question, is so and so a Christian? But the word Christian also has a more general sense. And you can use the word Christian to distinguish people, for example, who follow the Christian religion rather than are Muslims or Buddhists or atheists or secularists or whatever.

You could say, and that if you ask somebody who belonged to the Christian church somewhere, are you a Christian? They would readily say yes. But being a Christian, in that sense, is not the same as being saved.

You could say that in a sense, Lydia was a Christian, but she wasn't saved. It's possible to be a Christian, very possible to be a Christian, but not be saved in the sense of belonging to the Christian faith, belonging to the Christian church, being amongst people who gather regularly to worship God such as we do here.

That doesn't itself guarantee that a person is saved, that we have Christ as our Savior, that we have committed our life to Christ. So that's an important thing to actually see about Lydia as she's described there in the beginning.

[10 : 23] She was a worshiper. She belonged to this group of women who had come together there, but she didn't have her heart opened. She wasn't saved.

She wasn't in that relationship with God, with the Lord, where she willingly and knowingly had given her life to Him. That's, you see, something that I must ask myself today and you must ask yourself as well.

In what sense am I a Christian? We're all Christians in the sense that we are generally in that sense of it as Lydia was, we're part of the worship of God here.

We're Christians in the sense we belong to a Christian denomination. We belong to a Christian congregation. We may even belong to a Christian family known to be a family that has Christian associations perhaps over many generations.

We're Christians in the sense that we belong in that way to Christian things and to the Christian church. You could say, I'm a Christian in my head.

[11 : 28] I know that I belong in that sense to the Christian church and to the Christian faith, but am I a Christian in my heart? Do I really love the Lord?

Is my affection for Him something that I recognize in my Christian standing or is it just something that I have in my intellectual understanding of what it means to be a Christian?

So we have to ask ourselves that same question. Am I really? In what sense am I a Christian today? Am I a Christian just in the outward sense that I belong to a Christian church or denomination or am I also a Christian in my heart?

Am I saved? Is Jesus my Savior? Do I live in obedience to Him? Does He dominate my life daily? Now, although Lydia wasn't a saved person, though she was a worshiper, she was in a good place.

She was in a place of worship. That's why I said at the beginning today how gratifying, how encouraging, how good it is to see many people coming to church.

[12 : 45] Now, we know that being a Christian is not just the same thing as coming to church. There is far more to being a Christian in the proper inward heart sense of it and in the life conduct sense of it than just church attendance.

That's why we try to encourage people that there's more to what we want for them than that they would come to church. When you invite people, you do invite them to come to church. Yes, but there's more to it than that.

You want them to belong to those people who know the Lord as their Savior. You want them to belong to a spiritual family. You want them to have all the advantages that are possessed by those who are Christians in heart.

So, here is a woman who's in a good place just like you're in a good place today. You're in a much better place today for this hour than you would be outside of here.

Than you would be at home. That you wouldn't be that you would be like some people are probably just passing the time watching television or whatever. She was in a good place.

[13 : 51] She was in a place of worship. She was in a place where the word of God was going to reach her. And you all know that in Romans chapter 10 we read that faith comes by hearing.

You can say, well, I can hear the Bible at home. I can read it. I can hear God's voice as I read the Bible. I can sit in my chair at home. I can just give myself time. Yes, but when you go to Romans chapter 10 while all of that is through and it's good to sit and read your Bible at home.

Romans chapter 10 is talking about preaching. It's talking about people who are sent to preach. It's talking about people hearing the word preached. The word expounded.

The word, as Paul was doing here to this group of women actually preaching the word. He was actually not just an ordinary conversation to them. He was expounding to them from the scriptures.

The things. Because that's what he always did whenever he came to this kind of situation. That's what Paul actually did. He spoke to them in a way that expounded the word.

[15 : 02] So she was in a good place. And being in a good place means it's all more all the more likely that good things are going to happen to you. She was a worshiper but she was not saved.

But secondly Lydia was saved when Jesus opened her heart. That's what you read here. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia.

The Lord opened her heart to pay attention. To pay heed. To give close attention to what was said by Paul.

The Lord opened her heart. Paul didn't do it. She didn't do it herself. And although there are many places in the Bible that appeal to us to open our hearts to the Lord it is the Lord himself actually ultimately who opens our heart because this is a creative act.

Only someone who has the power of creating things from nothing as God has can open our hearts. And that's what happened to Lydia. She went from being a mere hearer of the word to being someone who really took in the word in such a way that she gave herself to it as we'll see in a minute.

[16 : 20] The Lord opened her heart. This word in Greek means like what you do with doors that you have coming into the hall there. Double doors which would often be found in buildings and certainly in the more grand houses in those days as even today.

They have double doors and in order to gain a full entrance you need both doors to be opened wide. Well that's really what happened because sometimes we might feel content with just having one door of the double doors of our heart opened and we may feel that that's enough.

But you see when God opens our heart he just opens it wide open. He opens both doors. He gives himself access fully into our hearts.

In Luke 24 we have the same word used very interestingly in a way that gives us another angle from which to see this. Remember Luke is the same author the same man who wrote the book of Acts as wrote the gospel of Luke.

So he's pulling from his own experience although of course he's guided by the spirit of God as he wrote these books that are now in the Bible. But in Luke chapter 24 and verse 45 these people that had met with Jesus remember this is Jesus now risen from the dead he rose from the dead and he was walking with them and they didn't know him at first and he opened their minds so that they would understand the scriptures.

[18 : 01] He'd been speaking about himself speaking to them about all these things in the scriptures about salvation and about the Messiah and about himself and he opened he opened their minds he opened their minds so that they would understand the scriptures and their own testimony of it was in verse verse 32 did not our hearts burn within us while he opened to us the scriptures see the way open the word open is used there that the Lord opened their minds to understand the scriptures they themselves then said as they looked back on this moment did our hearts not burn within us did we not have this tremendous feeling of warmth something happening in our hearts did we not have this burning inside us this kind of fiery feeling inside of the strange thing happening to us while he opened to us the scriptures it all comes together

Jesus opens the mind and that opens the scriptures for us because while our hearts are closed the scriptures are closed we know them intellectually we know them in terms of what they say outwardly but this is different the Lord opened Lydia's heart so that she paid attention so that the scriptures were open to her so that she heard as she had never heard before so that she came to understand the things that Paul was actually saying and it was her heart that was changed the Lord opened her heart what is the heart what is your heart we're not talking about a physical heart the thing that beats here that pumps blood around your body this is talking about something spiritual this is talking about our soul as it's put elsewhere in the Bible the spiritual part of a human being that in which you think that in which you have a conscience that in which you have a will that's where your emotions lie all the things that apply to us spiritually the things if you like that go on even when our body is no longer living because when your body and soul are separate your body is dead but you go on living and you go on living spiritually because you still have a mind and you still will have an understanding and you'll still have a consciousness and you'll still have emotions and you'll still have a conscience the Bible makes all that so clear to us and so what was changed was Lydia's heart

Lydia's inner being think of the psalmist Psalm 51 where David is saying Lord you desire truth in the inward parts that's a great description the inward parts plural because our inward life is made up of all these parts you have you have your understanding or your mind you have your will that governs your doing things you have your emotions you have your conscience you have all of these things that make up your soul the Lord opened her heart he opened her inward parts and when your heart is opened everything in your soul is opened your understanding is opened you see things differently your emotions are opened you come to love the Lord truly sincerely passionately your will is renewed your will is opened because you willingly receive this Jesus you willingly give yourself to him you willingly accept his authority over your life and your conscience is opened and indeed quieted calmed pacified because instead of knowing yourself as a guilty unforgiven sinner with Jesus in your life and in your possession and your trust in him

God comes into your conscience with this new life to assure you you don't need to be afraid that you will actually be lost or condemned because this Jesus has taken your place the Lord opened her heart you see that means that she was changed from inside and that's the change that really is conversion conversion is not imposing something from outside it's not actually somebody trying to copy as we were saying to the children it's not somebody trying to copy what a Christian is it's not somebody trying outwardly to live a Christian life as they see that Christian life in someone else or as they understand from the Bible's teaching what a Christian life is about conversion is not imposing that from outside or actually copying that by an outward conformity to it conversion takes place in the inner parts and it works out from there and it comes to show itself then in our way of life that doesn't mean that everybody knows as Lydia would have known this the exact moment when she was converted the Lord opened her heart and she immediately knew that something had happened because she acted in a certain way you might be here and may not know when the Lord opened your heart the precise moment that's not the important thing the important thing is that our life is not what it used to be that we are

Christians in our hearts doesn't matter whether or not you actually know the moment the precise moment and the circumstances what really is important today is that your heart is opened that the Lord has come to occupy your heart that that's the reality for you inwardly and you might be here saying well if the Lord opens my heart and if it's the Lord alone that opens my heart there's nothing else required of me to do is there what can I do well Lydia had a desire Lydia wanted to be the Lord's that's what left her there her desire was toward God and while it is true indeed that only the Lord can open our hearts it's not true to say that we have nothing to do if your heart is not opened have you asked him to open it do you want it opened is your heart set upon being open to the Lord or are you just still satisfied with one door only because that will not do for

[25 : 33] God when the Lord opens our heart he comes to open it fully do you want your heart opened do you want Jesus in control of your life do you want everything to be handed over to him do you want him to have charge of it all do you want to be a Christian from the inward side outwardly well that's what you bring to God and you can use the words of David Lord create in me a clean heart open my heart change me inwardly make me a Christian in heart as well as being a Christian outwardly in what I belong to and you see the result of that was that she paid attention to what was said by Paul this is obviously the result of opening and this is also an interesting word the way it's translated there to pay attention or to give heed to as it is in the AV but the literal meaning of this includes the idea of her giving herself over to what she was hearing it's the idea of handing herself over or giving herself up to what she was actually hearing it says here that she paid attention to what was being said by Paul and undoubtedly if you look at all the other passages in the book of Acts where Paul is preaching what he was preaching was

Christ what he was preaching was about the death of Jesus the resurrection of Jesus the supremacy of Jesus the sufficiency of Jesus the suitableness of Jesus was all about Christ it was all about him he was the center of it all he really made up the gospel this is the gospel this is what Paul was preaching and as he was preaching to these women this is what this woman handed herself over to it wasn't just that she heard it and gave close attention to it more than before yes there was that she had a different kind of hearing but it's the kind of hearing where she said I have to give myself to this I can't stand outside this any longer I can't just be on the outside looking into this teaching and to this Jesus and to all that this man is telling me about this Jesus I have to be inside this I have to give myself to this I have to give myself over to that and there's a word similar to that in

Romans chapter 6 verse 17 where Paul is talking about the way that life is changed by God's grace and how that involves the word that is taught this word that we have this Bible this teaching this gospel and in Romans chapter 6 this is we've looked at the verse very often but just to remind yourself of it in verse 17 there this is what he's saying you were slaves to sin once he said but now you're servants of God you've come right round but what he's saying is thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient listen to it from the heart see the heart is mentioned right there again you have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching that means the standard of God in the gospel you have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed and there's an amazing thing involved in that when Lydia came to give herself over to this teaching unto this

Christ her life began to dig on a certain shape because that's what this truth does to you it molds you it brings you into the shape of Christ himself it makes you more and more like him and that's what God intends you will be as a Christian in the full sense when the journey ends you will be in the image of God son that's a glorified Christian that's what God has in his intention in his plan what he will do it's the consequence of opening the heart that brings us to give ourselves to this word to this teaching why doesn't the world out there like the Bible why don't people who are secular or atheists really like the Bible why do they have such a hatred for the

Bible why because it tells them how to live because it tells them that their lives have the wrong shape because they the Bible insists that you have to come from the shape that's shaped by sin as Paul says in Romans 7 there in Romans 6 verse 17 you were once servants of sin and that's what naturally we're glad to be we don't mind having the shape of sin about us because because we like it and to begin with when the Bible comes to challenge that and when God stands in front of us in the Bible when Jesus comes in the preaching of the word and says I want you to move from what you are to something that is actually its opposite that's when it becomes something that you don't like until God opens your heart when he does that's the effect of it you give yourself over to the opposite of what you once wanted to be has that happened with yourself with myself do you want today to be like Jesus does holiness appeal to you has your heart been opened well you can answer it in that way if you want to be like Jesus your heart's been opened if you want to live for him your heart's been opened if you want to be as like him as you can possibly be in this life your heart is opened if you want to leave sin completely behind you and come into the shape of

[32 : 09] Christ likeness then your heart is opened and you can see the difference there between the word heard at the beginning of verse 14 and the words pay attention at the end of verse 14 there's a long distance between heard and paid attention she heard that's to begin with she heard Paul speaking the way you're hearing me today human voice saying certain things you hear that intellectually you hear that outwardly you hear that in an ordinary sense but you see the Lord opened her heart and then she came to hear in a different way she came to hear in a way that gave herself to what she was hearing she committed herself to the Christ that was preached to her and that's what every preacher of the gospel every genuine preacher of the gospel would love to know and would want to know that everybody hearing them outwardly has come to hear in the way

Lydia heard that's what I pray for for you today that's what my heart's desire is someone called by God to preach the gospel that you hear more than my voice that you see more than my person that you will say today I have to give myself to what I'm hearing because I'm hearing the Lord and I know that he's here and I can't stand outside anymore the Lord opened her heart so that she gave herself she paid attention to what was said by Paul and let me just close by saying that not only is there the opening of her heart but there is also the opening of her home because practically it follows that when a person has been changed then things in their daily life changes and here is a woman who says to Paul and Silas after she was baptized whenever that was it may not have been immediate but her whole household was baptized as well she urged us saying if you have judged me to be faithful to the

Lord in other words she's saying if you have considered that I indeed am a genuine believer then come to my house and stay now that's a huge moment in Philippi because remember there's no synagogue there's no church building there's nowhere for the church to meet they're outside by a riverside and this one woman who's obviously well to do she's a businesswoman seller of purple things that's what Thyatira was known as she opened her house Lydia's house became the meeting place to begin with at least of the church in Philippi it's a huge moment it's a significant moment God is providing a place for them where they can meet to worship him and it all started with the opening of a single heart it led to the opening of this home and that means that God's people can come when they're converted in

Philippi this is where they'll meet Lydia's house that's a huge moment for the church for the gospel for the city of Philippi and of course it tells us too that when we're converted when our heart is opened other things are opened our homes are opened our finances are opened our practical goods are opened for the Lord they all belong to the Lord we see that they all belong to the Lord we'll give them to the Lord service and that's really what's meant here by she urged us saying come to my house and she prevailed upon us you see she didn't just say would you not like to come for a cup of tea she urged them she just would not take no for an answer she was insistent maybe they were reluctant at first we don't know but in any case she prevailed upon us as how

Luke puts it we could not resist her urging of us she was so committed to supporting the gospel to supporting the church to supporting these people who had come to preach the gospel she urged this upon us that's a good thing when our heart is opened we come to be concerned and we take up a concern for the Lord's cause for the Lord's church for the Lord's people for the Lord's word for the Lord's day for everything that we see with the Lord's name stamped upon it it is his and we are his and we show that we're his by our commitment to his cause so there is Lydia she was a worshipper but she wasn't saved but she was saved when Jesus opened her heart and when

[37 : 50] Jesus opened her heart she immediately opened her home let's pray gracious Lord we pray that our hearts may be opened to you and opened by you we pray that all that we have as you have given it to us in life will be committed to serving you and to the good of your name and your cause your church your gospel we ask that you would Lord each and every day help us to open the doors of our hearts to you we pray that by your Holy Spirit you will direct us so that we will willingly and gladly give ourselves to you and to be your servant go with us now we pray and be with us again as we intend to meet this evening we pray this in Jesus name Amen Amen