



## Acts 16:6-15, 40

# Lydia: A Woman with an Open Heart

All that Jesus began to do and teach in His incarnate body of the flesh He is still doing, but now He does it in a different body. He is no longer limited, no longer restricted. Having risen ascended, and by the baptism of the Holy Spirit having united Himself with those who believe in Him, He created a new Body, a spiritual Body. Now we watch that same Lord carrying on the same work through these members of His Body –the local church.

We are given another good example of the work of Christ through this Body in Acts chapter sixteen. We see Christ through His Spirit leading and guiding the Body of Christ in ministry. Paul left on the second missionary journey from Antioch to revisit the churches already founded on the previous trip. He had no vision of the invasion of Europe with the Gospel when he left Antioch on that journey. He was headed to Asia when the Holy Spirit blocked him. At Troas he had a vision, a surprise, a fresh new call, and open door of vast expanses stretching out before his eyes of a whole new continent. There was the deep conviction of Paul and his team that this was the mind of God. When he saw the man over in Macedonia in his vision pleading for help he then changed course and headed to Macedonia. He and his team came to the ultimate result of processing and concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel there. It is the lesson of Divine overruling and the Divine government in sovereign control of His eternal purposes.

In this experience of the apostle Paul and his team we learn principles for our walking with Christ today. How do you know when God is leading in your life?

## CHRIST IS SEEN OPENING AND CLOSING DOORS

### *Christ prepares hearts to receive Him*

Watch Christ at work preparing the hearts of individuals who will receive His word (Acts 16:5-10).

Sometimes God closes doors for those who are willing to serve Him (vv. 5-8). It seems strange to us when God closes doors because this is our passion to see people come to Christ and their Lord and Savior.

The churches that had been founded on the previous journey were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily (v. 5). They were enjoying an effective ministry of helping these churches become established, settled, confirmed and mature in their faith. There was also a day-by-day increase of people coming to Christ. There was an inward intensive spiritual growth and an outward extensive evangelistic growth. God was at work in their midst.

It is startling for us when we think of the Holy Spirit forbidding, hindering or preventing Paul from preaching. However, Luke tells us the apostles passed on through the region of Phrygian and Galatia, but were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak to work in Asia, i.e., west coast province of Asia Minor (v. 6). They then went to Mysia and were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them. It is the picture of them attempting, trying again and again to enter an area to minister and the Holy Spirit forbidding them. It must have been a puzzling and baffling time. Then they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas (vv. 7-8). Asia needed the Gospel, but this was not in God's timing. Need did not constitute their call. The Holy Spirit is the Administrator of missions. He is the One who is seen forbidding, guiding, directing, opening and closing of the doors. It is clearly a picture of the Holy Spirit forbidding Paul and company of starting new work in the northwest province of Asia Minor. He moves on to the east and is forbidden by the Spirit of Jesus to stop and preach. We have the picture of Paul skirting along the edge of Mysia and Bithynia. They had just come from the east and had been forbidden to go south or north, but they did not presume that the Lord was leading them to the west. They waited for His specific directions. Just as need is not the basis of a call, neither is logic alone the basis. Then God opened the doors of ministry. These prohibitions led to a profound conviction of the open doors to preach the gospel in Europe.

Watch how God opens the doors (vv. 9-10). They were now at Troas, near the site of ancient Troy. In verse nine Luke tells us, "A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' 'Come, help us, to be saved. Come, help us to obtain salvation. This is a Macedonian, Greek in Europe pleading to hear the gospel.

It reminds us of the words of Jesus to the church at Philadelphia, Asia Minor in Revelation 3:8. "I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. "

I sometimes wonder if Dr. Luke didn't have a twinkle in his eye or grin when he wrote, "a certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing. It wasn't a single appeal. He kept standing and kept on pleading to Paul and team 'Help!' 'Help us! Luke by his language indicates he could have identified him if he wanted to. Luke knew who the Macedonian man was. Was that man in the vision Dr. Luke? We don't know, but Luke sure knew him.

Paul saw in his vision a man of the providence of Macedonia standing there and appealing to him and he "kept standing and kept on pleading," "Help!" "Help us!"

God is at work all about us and He invites us to come and join Him in His work. What a shame when we go off half-cocked on our own in our own strength to do the will of God. God as this passage teaches is already at work

Acts 16:6-15, 40 Lydia: A Woman with an Open Heart  
strength to do the will of God. God as this passage teaches is already at work  
and He chooses to invite us to come and join Him where He is at work.

Verse ten gives us the reasoned conclusion and consensus of the team.

When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia,  
concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. ”

Here was the clear direction that Paul needed. Paul saw the vision and immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. It was a team consensus. They sensed the same leading and conclusion that Paul did. The word concluding means, to make go together, to knit together. They came to the conclusion after looking at the evidence that this is where God wants us to go and work. God uses various ways to guide and lead us.

God gave Paul the vision and the team concluded that this is where God wanted them to work. There was confirmation from the Body of Christ that God had spoken to Paul through the Holy Spirit in the vision.

It is quite interesting to the observer that beginning with verse ten Luke changes pronouns from they to we and us implying his own presence and participation in the events recorded. It is natural to accept the view that the writer joined Paul at Troas, perhaps as his physician (Col. 4:10; cf. Gal. 4:13, 14; 2 Cor. 12:7). The use of the first person begins at Troas and ceases at Philippi (v. 17), and is resumed again at Philippi on a subsequent voyage (20:6). I think it is plausible to think Luke will stay on and minister and rejoin the team in Acts 20:5 where he says some of the team had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, and in the next verse says we sailed from Philippi. This may well have been his place of residence and that he was the man in Paul's vision.

A. T. Robertson writes, We sought. This sudden use of the plural, dropped in 17:1 when Paul leaves Philippi, and resumed in 20:5 when Paul rejoins Luke in Philippi, argues conclusively that Luke, the author, is in the party ('we' portions of Acts) and shows in a writer of such literary skill as Luke that he is not copying a document in a blundering sort of way. Paul told his vision to the party and they were all ready to respond to the call. Then he writes on 20:5, Here again we have us for the first time since chapter 16 where Paul was with Luke in Philippi. Had Luke remained all this time in Philippi? We do not know, but he is with Paul now till Rome is reached. The seven brethren of verse 4 went on ahead from Philippi to Troas while Paul remained with Luke in Philippi (*Word Pictures, Acts*).

### ***Paul's response to an open door (vv. 11-12)***

Observe carefully the response of Paul and company to the call of God. They acted on what they believed to be the will of God. The next day they went to the harbor, purchased their tickets and set sail by boat to the port city of Neapolis. They struck a beeline to the district of Macedonia. It was a speedy trip because they got the wind in their sails.

So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days (vv. 11-12).

They landed at Neapolis and without staying there headed to Philippi where a Roman colony was located. At this point Paul was probably impatient to arrive at a town and commence his ministry. He consistently sought cities of primary importance in which radiating centers of Christian influence could be established in a greater outreach of the Gospel to smaller communities.

The ancient name for Philippi was Crenides from its many springs in the area. Later Philippi was seized and named in honor of Philip of Macedon who rebuilt the city and fortified it. It passed to the Romans with the rest of Macedonia in 168 B.C. In 42 B.C. it was the scene of the great battle which decided the fate of the Roman republic, in which Octavian and Anthony defeated Brutus and Cassius. Augustus established a colony composed of soldiers who had been partisans of Anthony. These Roman colonies such as Philippi were organized precisely on the model of the great metropolis with government, laws, and language so that it was a miniature Rome. Philippi was a first-class city of the highest rank.

The word for "straight course" means they struck a beeline, sailing before the wind with a speedy trip. Luke's language is vivid. It helps us feel the excitement of being at the center of the will of God. What an example this experience is for us.

What is my attitude when I know God's will? Do I run a straight course, or do I linger behind? Do I look for excuses, and drag my feet? Do I have the right attitude toward God in striking a beeline of obedience? It is wonderful being involved in something that will still be worthwhile a million years from now. Paul had the right attitude. God help us to be like-minded.

When the team arrived at Philippi they "were staying in the city some time" with the idea of resting quietly, observing and doing nothing else. They were observing the culture and watching to see where God was at work. They were waiting for the specific opportunity to share Christ. What a contrast this scene is from that in Asia.

## **CHRIST WAS PREPARING THE HEART OF A WOMAN**

### ***A business woman in Thyatira***

A woman of commerce was the first known convert on the continent of Europe. Thyatira is where the purple dye industry was located. The dye was procured from a shell-fish (*purpura murex*) and used to dye cloth.

A businesswoman was temporarily residing at Philippi for the purpose of selling her dyed cloth. She evidently was a successful and very wealthy businesswoman who made her living by working with this very expensive dye. We learn that her home was large enough to be capable of entertaining Paul and his associates.

### ***Lydia was "one who worshipped God."***

Lydia was one of several women who were proselytes to the Hebrew faith. The Holy Spirit was preparing her heart to receive His message.

We learn in verse 13 the opportunity came when they went to "a place of prayer." It appears to have been, not an edifice, but a space or enclosure in the open air consecrated for this purpose. It was a designation of a Jewish religious site. It was a Jewish prayer meeting in open air, outside the city gates, near a stream where a supply of water for washing of hands before prayer was readily available. The small stream of flowing water would also be sufficient for the ordinance of baptism by immersion of adults.

And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled (v. 13).

It was always Paul's plan to address the Jews first, and through them gain access to the Gentiles. He was

Acts 16:6-15, 40 Lydia: A Woman with an Open Heart

It was always Paul's plan to address the Jews first, and through them gain access to the Gentiles. He was concerned that his own people hear the Gospel.

Not only was God at work in this woman's heart, but also the Holy Spirit had been busy working in Paul's heart in past years (perhaps in Arabia). Every Pharisee prayed daily, "Oh God, I thank Thee that I am not a Gentile, I am not a slave, and I am not a woman." God changed that boy's heart.

Paul could write from the depths of his heart: "There can be neither bond nor free; there can be no male and female; for you are all one man in Christ Jesus."

"We sat down and began speaking to the women." Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke each took his turn preaching and giving testimony of God's grace. Paul, the converted Pharisee preached the Good News in Christ, and Lydia a Greek proselyte hung on to every word! The resurrected Christ was operating through Paul.

The Lord opened the heart of Lydia as she "was listening" (v. 14). The verb is imperfect meaning a sustained attention. She really kept on listening to each word. She sat on the edge of her seat listening to every word. She hung on to the words of each of the speakers. Every pastor loves that kind of an audience. She had an open mind and the right attitude for learning great spiritual truths.

The "Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." In fact Luke says He "opened up wide, completely, her heart." Her heart was enlightened, impressed by the Holy Spirit and thus prepared to receive the truth about Christ. My good friend Nancy Woolnough used to close our "Happiness Is" broadcast with the words, "Keep your heart tender toward God. Keep it wide open to hear and respond to God's Word." Lydia heard the good news of Christ's death and resurrection and believed on Christ. Paul would later tell the Philippian jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (v. 31).

Lydia's immediate response is shared with us in verse fifteen. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay. And she prevailed upon us."

The Lord opened her heart up and she believed and afterwards was baptized.

And her household indicates she had a strong influence on other members of her family and business acquaintances. Who these individuals were is mere conjecture. They may have been family members or business associates. There is nothing in this text, however, that gives any indication that anyone except adult believers were baptized. Children had not begun to be baptized in the time of the apostles. Only adult baptism of believers is demonstrated in the New Testament. The members of the household are probably women who assisted Lydia in her business. Only in such cases in which they were so far developed spiritually that they could profess it were they baptized. The baptism of children was not an apostolic institution, but arose gradually in the post-apostolic age and a long-continued resistance. The practice of infant baptism was unknown at this period in church history. We cannot infer the existence of infant baptism from this passage. Baptism of infants did not become general in the church till after the time of Augustine. It is improbable in the highest degree that her household includes children of immature age.

Our polity is to follow this line of teaching in the New Testament and baptize by immersion only adult believers and not infants. We teach the proper mode of baptism is by immersion of the individual down below the water. It is a demonstration of the meaning of baptism which is our identification with Christ. We were living in sin and we died in Christ and were buried and have risen to new life in Christ. It is a testimony of what has already taken place within the believer. Upon your profession of faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and in obedience to His command I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the

personal Savior and in obedience to His command I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, ðò goes the formula for baptism. It is a testimony of the individual's faith in Christ to all those present observing the individual being baptized. The believer emerges from the water, dripping wet indicating their identification with Christ. Such a person is identified as the wet one. It is an outward sign of a greater inner identification with Christ that took place the moment the individual believed on Christ as their Savior.

The apostle Paul always kept his eye fixed on one thing, justification by faith, and carefully avoided everything that could give the impression of support to the notion of justification by outward things. This would include baptism as well as circumcision.

She opened up her house and Luke says she constrained them to enter into her home. Lydia's home became the location of the little church at Philippi. Our English word *abide* is too strong for this context because it suggests a permanent residence. She urged the whole company, including Luke to stay there for the time being (cf. v. 40). By the way, did you catch where Lydia was from? The first convert was not only a woman, but also a woman of Thyatira in Asia the very area where Paul had been forbidden to enter on this trip! Very likely through Lydia and her servants and dependants others in Thyatira heard the message when she returned home. I never cease to be amazed at how God does things when we are obedient to Him.

I had the privilege of sharing Jesus Christ with a young college student from the U. S. who was married to a beautiful Ecuadorian lady. I had been praying for the opportunity to witness to my friend and the Lord opened his heart in a moment of crisis and I told him about the life that Jesus Christ gives. Like Lydia he opened his heart wide open and put his faith in Christ as his Savior. Louis went home that day and shared Christ with his wife and she trusted Christ as her Savior. He became burdened for a student friend at the university and began praying for the opportunity to share Christ. We interviewed my friend on the radio several weeks later and his friend at the university sat in the studio listening to the testimony and he turned to me and said, "Man, I have been wondering what happened to this guy. He is not the same. He is a changed man. Now I know." I responded to him and shared Christ and with tears streaming down his cheeks trusted Christ in a radio studio. Today, my friend is a lay pastor in New Orleans and his student friend is an English and History professor in a university in New York. Look all about you and see where God is at work and see if He will not allow you to join Him in what He is doing.

## **Some Abiding Principles and Personal Applications for Today**

***When I have the right attitude toward God He will speak and I will listen.***

The Spirit leads men and women who look and watch and wait and follow. G. Campbell Morgan captures the heart of this great passage in his application:

The Spirit guides, not by flaming visions always, not by words articulate in human ears; but by circumstances, by commonplace things, by difficult things, by dark things, by disappointing things. The Spirit guides and moulds and fashions all the pathway.

The important thing is that the man whom the Spirit will guide is the man who is in the attitude in which it is possible for the Spirit to guide him. So we look again at this man, and we find an attitude of life revealed. It is that of loyalty to the Lord, faith in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and constant watchfulness. There is where we too often fail. It is when a man is in fellowship with the Lord that he sees that the disappointment and the difficulty are also under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the watcher of the Lord who sees the Lord. If we make up our minds that the way of guidance is the way of flaming vision, the rolling thunder, and an articulate voice, and a lifting to a height of ecstasy, then we may never be guided. But if we are watching

an articulate voice, and a lifting to a height of ecstasy, then we may never be guided. But if we are watching for Him, we shall find Him guiding us in the day of difficulty and the day of disappointment, and the day of darkness; when it seems as though the rhythmic and majestic flow of the river has ceased, and we are in the cross currents, and are tempest-tossed. . . What we need is confidence in the guidance of the Spirit in the hours when no voice is heard, and no vision is seen. If we follow then, the hour of vindication will come, there will come the vision, there will come the man of Macedonia. His voice will be distinctly heard, and then we shall conclude that God would have us go into Macedonia (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 377).

***When God speaks our response should be a quick obedience.***

Always act immediately whenever you sense God is opening a door. Don't hesitate. Don't put it off. Here am I, Lord, send me should be our quick response to His will.

***Spend some time looking for where God is at work all about you.***

Find a place where God is preparing hearts for the Gospel and patiently wait sowing your seeds. God will bring forth the fruit. He will open the hearts of those whom He has prepared for salvation.

***Where is God at work in your own life?***

Have you come to the place in your spiritual life whereby you know that when you died you will go to heaven?

Let's suppose you died today and stood before the Lord God and He said, "Why should I let you into my heaven? What would you say?" What do you think you would say?

***When God opens the door be ready to share Christ.***

As a believer are you seizing the opportunity God has given you to share the Gospel? It may be that God can't use you at this time because your heart is not right with Him. If that is the case will you take a few moments right now and get things straighten out with Him? 1 John 1:6-10 is the Christian's bar of soap. Use it often. Claim the forgiveness of Christ and ask Him to take you and use you right where you are today.

Take a few minutes today and write out your salvation experience. Think it through and include key Scriptures on salvation. Below is a link to "Peace with God" with Scriptures to help you. This is the best preparation to share Christ with a lost friend or colleague.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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Title: Acts 16:6-15, 40 Lydia: A Woman with an Open Heart

Series: People in the Life of Christ

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