

# Acts

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[ 0 : 00 ] As the Lord shall be pleased to help me, I shall call your attention to a subject you will find in the Acts of the Apostles.

Chapter 16 and the 14th verse. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Chapter 16, the Acts of the Apostles and the 14th verse.

I do not know whether you realize it, but this word which is recorded here is unique inasmuch as it is the first instance of a sinner being born again on European soil.

This is the first recorded instance of such a miracle of grace being wrought. And yet, the world had been going on for over 4,000 years.

[ 1 : 45 ] And I want you to understand, there is no doubt whatever, that over that long period, the Holy Spirit had been at work and beyond all questioning.

There must have been multitudes wrought upon directly by the Spirit of God. But this instance to do with Lydia is the first recorded one whereby the preaching of the gospel upon European soil was attended with success.

And I want, as the Lord shall help me, to look at the subject from two or three viewpoints of it.

And especially in approaching the subject, I want to look at the setting of it. And now in the context, it is set forth how the Apostle Paul and Silas and Timothy, that they went through the cities and delivered them the decrees for to keep.

These decrees are equivalent to what we call articles of faith, making up a creed.

[ 3 : 22 ] The decrees for to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem, and so were the churches established in the faith and increased in number daily.

And now I want you to follow this along because, especially you dear young people, that you might have a right understanding of how the Spirit of God does work and bring to pass His eternal purposes.

Because in the days in which you and I are living, there are varied notions about the Spirit of God and concerning His work.

But in the context here, you will see how to have a balanced judgment of how the Majesty of Heaven is pleased to fulfill His word, go ye forth into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

And now I believe that commission given to the disciples long ago is often very much misunderstood.

[ 4 : 44 ] And that if you read the Acts of the Apostles to see how the Apostles fulfilled that commission, you will find that they were given grace to do it, but always with a qualification.

And that is the choice where they were given grace to do it, but always with a qualification. And that is the choice where they were to go was not their own. Remember that, it is all important.

And now listen to this, what the word of God records. And remember it was the Apostle Paul, who would lose no opportunity to preach the gospel, wherever it was afforded him to do so.

Because his heart overflowed with grace and desires that the kingdom of God should be extended.

And yet he had to be subject to the Holy Spirit's will as to where he was to go and what was his work to do.

[ 5 : 59 ] Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they are saved to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not.

And now it may be the Apostle Paul had many searchings of heart about this, but he was obedient to what were the dictates of the Spirit of God.

And they, passing by Mysia, came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us.

And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

And lower down it says how eventually they arrived at Philippi. And then, what may sound strange reading, and we were in that city abiding certain days.

[ 7 : 27 ] You see, the Apostle Paul did not go out at some street corner right away and begin to preach the gospel. But as he had had the vision, and he had been obedient to it, and as he believed he was under the anointing of the Spirit of God, he waited to see what was indeed the will of God as to what his work should be.

And you cannot organize going into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. This is the great mistake which is being made in the so-called religious world nowadays.

Oh, they think they will have a great gathering here or there for the revival of the Church of Christ, and so they get their organization going.

But there are not those signs evident in following which show that they were anointed by the Spirit of God because I want you dear young people especially to remember that oft times the Spirit of God does not work by organizations.

By which I mean you cannot organize a revival in the Church of Christ, however much you desire it. This word remains in the Word of God, not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts.

[ 9 : 13 ] And so you find eventually the Apostle Paul, on the Sabbath, we went out of the city by a riverside where prayer was wont to be made.

And we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither. Oh, it seemed a very little beginning to what may be according to the vision the Apostle Paul may have had in his mind.

There was indeed a great work to be done in Macedonia, and so there was. But it was a very wee beginning. Here he is, giving an address unto the women and a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira which worshipped God, heard us whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

And that was the beginning of the Church of Christ at Philippi, which was one of the most outstanding churches in New Testament times.

And not only so, you will remember, I must not take up time in going into details, the Philippian jailer too was wrought upon and born again and he and all his house were baptized and they became also in membership with the Church of Christ at Philippi.

[ 11 : 10 ] And such was the confirmation of what the Apostle Paul had been helped of God to do that some years afterwards when he writes his epistle to the Philippians, what does he say?

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day, from that time when I was by the riverside and Lydia was wrought upon until now, being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ even as it is meet for me to think this of you all because I have you in my heart.

You see, it was a wonderful church, all sheep and no goats and all wheat and no tares when the Apostle Paul penned the epistle to the Philippians.

And there is just another thought here that it is on my mind to make a comment on and that is you must always understand there is a great difference between the work of an evangelist and the work of one whom God ordains to be a pastor.

A pastor is the overseer of a church, a company of sinners born again and he is used of God and the Spirit of God enables him that the people of his charge shall be helped to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[ 13 : 19 ] And now one who is an evangelist and he needs a special commission to be an evangelist he will be able to go wherever the Spirit of God ordains he shall go and preach the gospel to every creature but that does not mean that his preaching will be exactly on the same line of things as that of a pastor is because there is a great distinction between the work of the evangelist and of the pastor and that you must realize dear friends to have a right understanding of whenever there are better days dawning in the church of Christ and it can only come as the Spirit of God is poured upon us from on high and if you like and it would do you more good to read the Acts of the Apostles than it will to do other books that men may send out with the best intentions how to evangelize the world and with such like titles it would do you much more good to read the Acts of the Apostles which were the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles as they went forth preaching the gospel to every creature in whatever part of the world

God ordained they should go do remember that and there is a distinction I said and if you look at how the Apostle Paul preached on the Apostle Peter I should say how he preached on the day of Pentecost he spoke first of all to all those who were assembled and he charged them with the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ and he made plain what had been done when Jesus Christ was crucified on Calvary and the outcome of it was that many who were there listening to Peter preaching along that line of thought showing them their guiltiness before God in that which they had been guilty of doing in crucifying the Lord of life and glory then the Holy

Spirit followed that line of things and that was an evangelical line of things and that is the only way you can go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature you can show all men what is their attitude what should be their attitude before God with whom they have to do being his creatures in having to do with God as their creator I do want you to think these things over because when the apostle Peter had made this claim what do we read then now when they heard this they were pricked in their hearts and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles men and brethren what shall we do it was not till then do remember that not till then then Peter said unto them repent he did not say that to them before he showed them their case he made plain their wickedness in how they had lived how they had behaved and in their guiltiness before

God in crucifying Jesus Christ and the spirit of God wrought there and owned that preaching then said Peter unto them repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and with many other words did he testify and exhort saying save yourselves from this untoward generation do then keep that in mind I wanted to make that plain in approaching the subject that you must understand there is the great difference between the work of an evangelist and the work that a pastor is called of God to do being set over a church and now to come back to what was done when the apostle Paul was found at

Philippi and a certain woman named Lydia here is a word to notice the word certain when the spirit of God is at work it will always be a certain woman a certain man a certain youth a certain maid could be a certain little one one in the early years of life's mourning but it is always certain it is one special one of whom it is said I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy and so the spirit of God knew that there was this certain woman named

[ 19 : 48 ] Lydia by the riverside and Paul was directed thither that he might be owned of God in preaching the gospel that she might hear it to purpose and profit and have you noticed I expect you have I hope you have that in reading the word of God how often the spirit of God goes into details and a certain woman named Lydia a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira which worshipped God heard us she was found in the attitude of worship and she might have been as it were a proselyte but she was found at this time and in the place God had ordained among the women that resorted by the riverside where prayer was wont to be made and then it says who heard us whose heart the Lord opened and there

I want to begin a certain woman and the apostle Paul declares she heard us you are here in the gospel preached this sabbath afternoon but some of you may not be here in the gospel like Lydia did maybe when the apostle Paul began to preach Lydia began to listen and for a while she did not hear to purpose and profit but something happened to her and it says in Isaiah in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book and something wrought within Lydia's heart the word of

God tells us whose heart the Lord opened so that she began to listen with a solemn awareness that the things which the apostle Paul was proclaiming the gospel of Christ were things of unspeakable importance yea things of eternal moment and there is one thing about this calling by grace of Lydia which is very helpful I judge to some of you and that is there was nothing striking about it it was just that she was a hearer and only God knew even the apostle Paul while he was preaching did not know only

God knew what was happening in Lydia's heart and it is like that with those of us who try to preach who have been trying to do it for so long some of us or we do not know what is happening what really you do think some of you about the gospel that you listen to whether you hear it or whether you hear to purpose and profit like Lydia did and a certain woman named Lydia heard us what did the Savior say to his disciples blessed are your ears for they hear but do you know the Savior in preaching his own gospel as he went about as verily man preaching it as none other could possibly do he must have preached to tens of thousands in his ministry from the time he began until the time his life was brought to a triumphant close and love's redeeming work was done all he must have preached

I say to tens of thousands but what did he say ye will not come unto me that ye might have life and now sometimes you see where people in the so called religious world have got to work organizing what they think will be a revival you will see they have a great banner to advertise it and sometimes they have these words all the world for Christ eh but dear friends however large hearted you may feel which is an impossibility for all the world to be for Christ because the dear saviour tells us very plainly I pray for them them whom thou hast given me

[ 25 : 45 ] I pray not for the world the world which lieth in wickedness there are those who by the spirit of God will be gathered out but you cannot take the world as a whole and think of the world for Christ it is not scriptural it is a misnomer do remember that and yet those who will be saved are a number which no man can number and even in Union Chapel this Sabbath afternoon how many of you have ears to hear the gospel in such a way that you desire to realize your own interest therein how many of you dear people are feeling assure my conscience of her part in the

Redeemer's blood and bear the witness with my heart that I am born of God do you remember when the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night ask what I shall give thee what did he ask for give therefore thy son a hearing heart that is the margin reading in the text wisdom to go in and out before this people but the margin reading is a beautiful bedrock truth give therefore thy son a hearing heart and you must hear like that otherwise it is like the saviour said the seed is fallen by the wayside or on stony ground or thorny ground and no fruit is brought forth to the sinners good or the glory of

God but these are they which in a good and honest heart receive the word and it springs up and it becomes fruitful and so it did with Lydia a certain woman named Lydia heard us whose heart the Lord opened that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul it does not appear that in Lydia's heart being opened she was led into the truth to a great depth at that time but when it comes to the Philippian jailer there he is about to take one step and the next one would have landed him in hell itself but by the grace of

God he was never allowed to take it and he was delivered on the very brink of hell yes and he came to the apostle Paul and Silas and said sirs what must I do to be saved and they said believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house and they spake unto him the word of the Lord and to all that were in his house and it was made wonderfully effectual because immediately he began to attend to the things which were spoken and he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes and was baptized he and all his straight way and when he had brought them into his house he set meat before them and rejoiced believing in God with all his house and now the

Philippian jailer he could tell of an earthquake in the jail and an earthquake in his conscience but there was no earthquake in Lydia's soul's experience but it is just beautifully simple a certain woman named Lydia heard us whose heart the Lord opened I say dear friends do you ask God to help you and do go back to when you first of all began to hear the gospel for yourself it will help you it will encourage you to hope in God if you can go back to when God first of all wrought within you and your ear was unstopped and you heard the gospel as you had never heard it before yet maybe you would live long right up through childhood years and teenage life and then you heard the gospel and you felt as you had never felt before in listening to it then it could be said of you blessed are your ears for they hear and keep in mind that word he that hath an ear to hear let him hear what the spirit said unto the churches but I want to go on farther whose heart the

[ 31 : 43 ] Lord opened and now when God did this great miracle for Lydia he did more than open her heart he lodged something in it which he alone could do then it was that the good work was begun and this was fulfilled to Lydia the entrance of thy word giveth light when she heard the apostle Paul preaching the gospel as he was enabled to do it by the spirit of God it was very effectual and she could hear and say it is true and she wanted to participate in the benefits and blessings of the gospel she was illuminated you remember

I have told you about the godly Hebrews and you think about them again it will not be vain repetition when he exhorts them call to remembrance the former days and to help you do it make a beginning after you were illuminated it was light the light of him who is the light of the world that was lodged in Lydia's heart in thy light shall we see light and there is a word in John's gospel in him was life and the life was the light of men so that Lydia was born again her ear was unstopped the eyes of the blind were opened and her heart was opened and the things of

God became from that memorable hour a blessed reality to her and from that time she lived her life desiring to be after the spirit the things of the spirit and there is no doubt whatever that when Lydia's heart was opened God lodged within a very solemn awareness to Lydia of what she was by nature as a sinner when he the spirit of truth is come he shall convince the world of sin and that heaven given conviction of sin beyond all questioning was lodged in Lydia's heart and she had to live her life hence forth under the realization that whenever she drew near to

God she would need to cry God be merciful to me a sinner a sinner illuminated which shall know every man the plague of his own heart yes whose heart the Lord opened and dear friends can you think of how Lydia behaved when she returned to where she was staying in the city of Thyatira can you think how she sought to draw near to God how it could be said of her as never before in the same sense of the word behold she prayed and now she was praying with a concern that she might enter into the reality of those things she had heard spoken of

Paul is that how you feel when Amen concludes the preaching of the gospel and when you get to the end of the Sabbath day is that one of your petitions that you may hoard up the sacred word and feed thereon and grow go on to seek to know the Lord and practice what you know wonderful mercy I will pour upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications and God was pleased to do that for Lydia at this time whose heart the Lord opened has God been pleased to do it for you do think on it and let your conscience tell you what is the answer another thing lodged in her heart was godly fear

[ 37 : 01 ] I can only give you hints because the time is going godly fear an unctuous light to what is right and to bar to what is wrong Lydia a seller of purple the word of God tells us and evidently she was in quite a big way of business because it speaks later on of her household being baptized with her and it is judged they were her servants who helped her in running her business life in the city of Thyatira but if there had been I say this with great reverence if there had been anything there ought not to have been you know Lydia was running her business before after she heard the gospel to purpose and her heart was opened she had matters right before

God and man yes and ran her business on a godly plan remembering them that honor me I will honor oh it tells us she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul and one of those things which he records in which no doubt he spoke often was to be diligent in business fervent in spirit serving the Lord oh this wondrous godly fear what a sweet blessed principle it is oh cry we to heaven with one loud accord that to us be given the fear of the Lord whose heart the Lord opened then I judge there was living faith in Lydia's opened heart and she could say concerning

Jesus Christ of whom the apostle Paul had spoken we believe and assure thou art the Christ the son of the living God Lord to whom can we go thou hast the words of eternal life not only so she possessed hope good hope through grace that she would indeed be favored with an interest in the things which were spoken of Paul and she was encouraged to follow on to know the Lord and I might just add there was love love love was lodged in Lydia's opened heart and it was such a love as she had never felt before nothing whatever to do with nature nor but that which is spiritual in its nature and which only sinners born again ever feel love is the golden chain that binds the favored souls above and it is a hair of heaven who finds his bosom glow with love and now you find that

Lydia with her opened heart found this love shed abroad and it was a love to the things which were spoken of Paul and it was a love to him of whom Paul spoke it was the beginning of a wonderful relationship with Lydia and so it is with every sinner born again I wonder if you have thought of things from that viewpoint when a sinner is born again when this love is lodged in his or her opened heart when the word of God is fulfilled he that loveth is born of God he comes into the family of God and now having said that what more can a preacher say I said he or she comes into the family of God and how big a family that is whenever you meet one of them anywhere at any time and you can speak one to another upon the things of

God you come into this blessed relationship and you are a brother or sister and you meet a brother or a sister to those with whom you speak upon the things which were spoken of Paul oh this love is wonderful in how it brings you into this great relationship there is a family on earth whose father fills a throne and though a seed of heavenly birth to men they are little known but look you they are known to each other and when you meet them you will find that relationship existing between them and you and we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren yes by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another and this love was lodged in

[ 42 : 52 ] Lydia's opened heart and it says whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul and now there are many things spoken in preaching the gospel but one thing the apostle Paul must have spoken about is made very plain and it says and when she was baptized and her household and now you see this relationship existing and bearing God honoring fruit and when she was baptized and her household her men folk her servants she besought us saying if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord if you have received my profession of the name of Jesus and accept me as a sister in the

Lord and that is the meaning come into my house and abide there and you know dear friends I might say there are hundreds of homes where those of us who preach the gospel in going up and down in our denomination of life are welcome to go and we should never cross the threshold except it was that those who dwell in those homes have attended to the things which were spoken of Paul and which by the grace of God we try to speak of too so that the opened heart means an open door in this home and that where you are welcome for Jesus sake and you may depend that Lydia did her utmost that Paul and Silas and young Timothy as they abode in her house should realize how welcome they were to be there and says

Paul and she constrained us the love of Christ constraineth us and you see her opened heart bubbled up and bubbled over with this love for the apostle Paul and those who were preaching setting forth these things which were spoken and it was a love to them as brethren in the Lord much might be said along that line of thought but I must come to the amen these things which were spoken of Paul will always produce the same effect wherever they are spoken of by men ordained of God to do so it will always mean that eternity must take precedence of time remember that it will mean it will mean separation from the world that you can no longer live as you have been living after the flesh the things of the flesh but you will be living after the spirit the things of the spirit as grace is given and another thing spoken of will be now you have come into this relationship and one with the church of

Christ if you have attended to the thing that was spoken of like Lydia did and she was baptized then it means there will be an endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace and another thing to be attended to is this forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is and so much the more as you see the day approaching and here is just another thing bear you one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ pray one for another thus may we abide in union with each other and the Lord and possess in sweet communion joys which earth cannot afford and now you may have thought when this subject was announced that the pastor is going to preach a baptizing sermon

I have told you I have never yet preached one and I never intend to do it as grace is given what is necessary is this a certain woman named Lydia heard us whose heart the Lord opened and she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul and you do not need to have all the time taken up about the necessity to be baptized when there may be one in the pew over whom the green grass will be growing in the church yard ere another Sabbath day should dawn nor it is to proclaim the things which the gospel makes known and do listen it is for you you to attend to the things which were spoken of

[ 48 : 53 ] Paul that you might have a good conscience before God and as it was with Lydia in attending to these things she was baptized and there are quite a few of you who do attend to many of the things which were spoken have been spoken through the long years of my pastorate here but as yet you have not attended to that viewpoint of the things which have been spoken and to be baptized what are you going to do about it I leave that between God and you Jesus says to each believer be baptized in my name he himself in Jordan's river was immersed beneath the stream then saith

Jesus to his disciples follow me the Lord help you to do amen And you out with you you you you