

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

March 12, 2017

The Lord Opened Her Heart

by Frank Himmel

In describing Lydia's conversion to Christ, Luke says, "And the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14). Consider this statement, the only one of its kind in Acts.

Her Heart Was Closed

The fact that the Lord opened Lydia's heart suggests it was previously closed in some way.

Calvinists typically assert the problem was hereditary depravity, our supposed wholly-incapable-of-doing-good nature passed down from Adam. The Bible teaches no such thing, and Lydia showed no signs of that. Prior to this "opening," Lydia was a worshiper of God (v. 14). She had assembled at a place of prayer on the Sabbath (v. 13). She was listening to Paul preach (v. 14). Does that sound like total depravity to you?

Some think God must perform some sort of direct operation on our hearts to enable us to understand His word, and that is what Luke is describing. This operation is said to be the work of the Holy Spirit.

However, since the word of God is itself "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18), this direct-operation view makes little sense. Besides, Luke says the Lord opened her heart to *respond*, not to understand. His word means to take heed, to pay attention to, to apply oneself to.

There is a far simpler explanation: Lydia's heart was closed to becoming a Christian due to ignorance. She was evidently either a Jew or proselyte, and as such she likely felt good about her relationship with God. She did not realize she was lost. It is quite possible that she had never heard of Jesus before this time. Even if she had, she may have initially rejected Him as her Savior

due to preconceived ideas about what the Messiah would be; many first-century Jews did (1 Corinthians 1:23).

This explanation exactly parallels Acts 26:18, which says Paul's work among the Gentiles was "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness [ignorance] to light and from

the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

Her Heart Was Opened

Understanding how Lydia's heart was closed makes it easy to see how the Lord opened it: He did so through the gospel, the message Paul preached. ▶



As Lydia listened to the gospel, the message “hit home,” as we say. Though described in different terms, this was no different than what occurred on Pentecost: “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart” (v. 37a). Luke could rightly say God opened Lydia’s heart because God is the author of the gospel: “it is the power of God for salvation” (Romans 1:16).

Just as gospel preaching was the way in which Paul would open the Gentiles’ eyes (Acts 26:18), it was the way God opened Lydia’s heart.

Interestingly, the only other occurrence in Acts of this word *opened* is a reference to gospel preaching.

And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining [opening] and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.” And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women (Acts 17:2-4).

Conclusion

When the Lord opened Lydia’s heart, she was baptized (v. 15a). After that, both she and Paul assessed her as faithful to the Lord (v. 15b).

Have you allowed the Lord to open your heart? ■

Forgiven

by Frank Himmel



“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account” (Romans 4:7-8).

These verses are a citation of the beginning of Psalm 32, David’s hymn about the wrong way and right way to deal with guilt.

David learned by experience that trying to hide guilt only leads to misery; it even produces adverse physical effects (vv. 3-4). He found no relief until he decided to confess his wrong to the Lord and seek forgiveness (vv. 5-6). (It is worth mentioning that in the case of his sin with Bathsheba, David did not acknowledge his guilt until his friend Nathan tactfully, yet forcefully, pointed it out.)

What was David’s advice? Do not be stubborn like a horse or a mule (vv. 8-9). Seek the Lord (vv. 6-7). “Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him” (v. 10). The blessed man is righteous and upright in heart (v. 11). ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Carlos Garcia	John Baucom	Adam Gibson
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Carlos Garcia	Albert Lee Harrison
OPENING PRAYER	Greg Winget	J B Williams	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Brian Wilson	Brian Wilson	
CUP	Ron Cunningham	Ron Cunningham	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Albert Lee Harrison		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Steven Turner
CLOSING PRAYER	David Gray	Don Rapp	Albert Harrison Sr