

A Truly Liberated Woman

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I've entitled the message, Portraits of Two Women. I thought about all different kinds of titles but that's the one I settled on. It's inoffensive in any way shape or form. The two women we're going to talk about one is transfigured and the other is disfigured. And I thought I could have spoken on figures of women but someone may have misunderstood. So we're going to call it portraits of two women and, you know, save ourselves from any embarrassment. A transfigured woman and a disfigured woman or if you will, a liberated woman and an enslaved one. And today, particularly we're going to talk about a lady that I call Lydia the liberated lady. And next Sunday we'll get to the second one.

Now these two women that we're going to meet today are opposites. One of them is godly and one of them is Satanic. One of them is liberated, one of them is enslaved. One of them belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, one of them does not. And really they are mirrors of every woman. For to one degree or another every woman fits in to the Lydia category or the category of the maid who had a spirit of divination. There are only two kinds of women in the world, you know that don't you, liberated ones and enslaved ones. For that matter there are only two kinds of men in the world, liberated men and enslaved men.

Now let's back up a little bit in our study, just so we can get a feeling for what's happening in the text. For a while Paul and Silas on this the second missionary tour, must have had the feeling that the Spirit of God was practicing on the word 'no'. Because no matter which direction they desired to go they were stopped by the Holy Spirit. Now let me just help you by letting you look at the map for a moment. Over here off the map in this area is Jerusalem and they had come north, they had come from Antioch which is in the outside of the map area and they had progressed on the second missionary tour, Paul and Silas, and they had come to Galatia where Paul and Barnabas had come on the first tour. And you'll remember that the first time around Paul and Barnabas founded churches, in fact, they came this way, they came through Paphos on the isle of Cyprus, they came up and through this way. But on this journey they came backwards and so they came to the churches that had already been founded at Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch in the area known as Pisidia. And they had there strengthened the believers, believing that the priority in evangelism is strong Christians who will reproduce themselves. We covered that last week. Well having accomplished the conformation or the strengthening of the Galatian Christians they then desired to go further west and conquer some new territory for the cause of Christ. Now it seemed very natural to progress

immediately west into an area known as Asia. Now this was Asia Minor. It was divided into several sections and we'll consider the section of Mysia in a moment but the whole area there is called Asia Minor. And so Paul's concern, let's go to Asia, great cities there, Philadelphia, Sardis, Thyatira, Pergamum or Pergamum, Smyrna, Ephesus these great cities that really became strong holds, for the gospel and later on became known in the book of Revelation as the churches of the Revelation. So he wanted to go west he couldn't go east. Why? He'd already been there. He couldn't go south. Water. He figured west and the greatest and the finest of the provinces was Asia and so he thought we'll just go there and work the gospel into Asia but it says in verse 6, notice it in chapter 16, "That the Holy Spirit forbid them to preach the Word in Asia." The Holy Spirit somehow shut the door. Now we don't have any specifics how He did that but it was done. Well that left them only one way to go, you can't go south, you can't go east you can't go west you go north. So they said, Aha, God is leading us to Bithynia which was another area to the north. And so they figured, - We'll press to Bithynia. The Holy Spirit had something to say about that in verse 7, "The Holy Spirit allowed them not." So the Holy Spirit had slammed every door. Now the average Joe Christian would have crumpled in a heap here and gone and bought a book at the local Christian bookstore on suffering. He would have no idea of what was next. He knew he couldn't go up or down and everything else was closed. But if you understand something of the persistence of Paul, you will know that he managed to wiggle a fine line between Bithynia and Asia and go along like that. And here was the persistence of a man that made him what he was. And in a sense we may believe that God actually closed all the visible doors in order to prove the faithfulness and the determination of this man Paul which would make him, really, the kind of man that God was really going to use. And it's a great thing for us, you know, when you see doors slam, keep moving that may be God's test of your faithfulness and out of that test may grow your capacity to do the job that really needs to be done. If you find yourself balking and folding when the first door closes it may be that you'll never see much of a door again after that. But if you're persistent as they were God will open some marvelous things.

Well, they kind of wiggled a tightrope and they went through the northern part, Mysia, it indicates that in verse 8, they came through Mysia to the little place called Troas which is located right there on the map. Now Troas was named Alexander Troas for Alexander, Alexander the Great. It was a town that became somewhat well-known, ten miles away from Troas was the city of Troy and I'm sure we're all aware of Trojans which comes from that.

Now this particular place had been a Greek city, a free Greek city until Caesar Augustus made it a Roman Colony. So Troas became a Roman Colony. This whole territory along the coast there on the eastern seaboard of the Aegean Sea was very famous. Helen of Troy, the great heroes of the Trojan War, Homer, Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Thales, Heraclitus a lot of very, very famous Greek names came from that area there. It was as Greek really as the land of Greece just across the Aegean Sea. It had been saturated and infiltrated by these Greek people. All right, so they arrived at Troas, well there's water next. Now what do we do? But having proven the faithfulness of their own commission and having really shown God persistence, God immediately gave them direction in verse 9. "A vision

appeared to Paul. He saw a Macedonian man" perhaps he recognized him because of his attire or maybe the man said he was from Macedonia, apart from what he did say. "He said, Come over into Macedonia and help us." There was the call of God in a dream, in a vision, at night. And here they were at Troas, Paul was there, Silas was there, Timothy was there remember they had picked up Timothy, and one other fellow joined them there. You remember who it was? It was Luke. You say, - Where does it say that? In verse 10, his name isn't there but listen, "And after he had seen the vision, immediately", what's the next word? "We". who wrote the book of Acts? Luke, that's the first of the 'we's' in the book of Acts. Here, somehow, Luke joins up. Now we don't know the circumstances. We do know that Luke was a doctor, he was a physician, and it may have been that Paul had one of his chronic ailments act up in Troas and they managed to find a local doctor. When this local doctor plugged into Paul they had a house physician from then on because he went with them. But here, apparently, Luke joins up and it becomes a 'we' so the author is indicating himself in the situation.

Well from Troas, the call of God - Go to Macedonia. Now that's fantastic, because, you see, that's the first step into Europe and the gospel is moving into Europe. Now it may have been that a trickling of the gospel had gotten to Rome before, we don't know, it's possible but here's the first great movement at least generated by the Apostle Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. And so the call of God is to extend the gospel to Macedonia.

Now Macedonia is a territory that is commonly today called Greece, it's this area, it was a part of it then, it's all really included in Greece now. And the gospel had now ceased to be a middle-eastern cult and had invaded Europe at its outpost in Macedonia. Macedonia, incidently, came under the power of Philip of Macedon, remember that Philip of Macedon was the father of Alexander the Great. And so from Macedonia, at one time, the rule of the world took place under Philip and Alexander. By now, though, it had become simply a Roman province but in it there were some great cities, Philippi, Thessalonica and down here was Athens and Corinth. So it was a very formidable area.

Now notice in verse 10 that when the vision had come there was no wasted time, immediately when they arrived at Troas God gave them the vision and I love what it says in verse 11, Therefore it's consequential to the call of God that immediately a means is provided to fill it out. Look, "Therefore, loosing from Troas", now the word loosing means to set sail. God never gave a call without providing a boat, do you understand that? God never asks somebody to do something without a vehicle to do it. It's a marvelous thing, but when the door opens you'll find the way right there ready. It's exciting. Now notice something further, "Loosing from Troas, as we came with a straight course", now that's unusual. They sailed on a straight course and notice that they had a middle stop there to Samothrace, here's Samothrace, this little island marked in red right there, it's pretty well half-way between Troas and Neapolis. And Neapolis up here is the Port of Philippi, ten miles inland to Philippi, they were going to Neapolis but they stopped at Samothrace which is this island that juts 5,000 feet in the air, it's a mountain coming out of the sea. And it's a nice little stopover place. So they stopped there for the night, "and the next day they proceeded to Neapolis", and were taken off the boat and, of

course, they walked to Philippi. But it's a tremendous thing to note at the end of verse 11 it says, "That they went on a straight course to Samothracia and the next day to Neapolis. That only took two days. The return trip took five days. And so we conclude that the sea and the wind was favorable. And again without spiritualizing it let me remind you that when God opens the door, the boat is ready and the winds are favorable. When it's time to move then God really moves, see. There they were two days later landing at Neapolis, the soil was European soil. And the gospel had landed at the outpost of actual European control of the Roman Empire. Well, it's an exciting thing. Well, immediately upon hitting Philippi, they, of course, walked to Philippi, they met two women.

The first two that are pointed out in the ministry of Paul and Silas in Macedonia were these two women in particular. Now let me say that these two women, as I said, mirror for us ah - all women in one sense or another because everybody fits into these categories even men. I couldn't help but think in reference to this message to the subject of Women's Lib which has so dominated our thoughts. And I'm not going to bore you with all my thoughts about it, just a few of them. It's amazing to me that the world and all of these people who are talking about liberation haven't got the faintest idea of what liberation is. The idea that liberation is going to work, putting your kids in a day-care center, better yet, having abortions whenever you want, that liberation is being free to fool around sexually with anybody you want, liberation is blatant lesbianism where you join a group and put on a parade, that liberation is shirking the responsibilities of the home, that liberation is violating the God-given patterns of love and submission, that is ridiculous. That is not liberation. What these people are really doing is exchanging one kind of human bondage for a worse kind. The women who are always wanting everything that men have, who ever said that men were liberated? That isn't liberation. You know, what they're really doing is like the prisoner who exchanged cells and thought he got released. That is not liberation. They're exchanging one kind of slavery for a different kind. But down deep I think they soon discover that what they really want is the flight of the soul. They want the soul to be free to transcend the bondage that they'll never transcend. So they buy Jonathan Livingston Seagull and they try to learn to practice so they can fly 240 miles an hour, spiritually. That's why that book sells because it's a seagull who goes beyond the capacities of seagulls, flies 240 miles an hour, that's what people want to do, they want to fly beyond the situation in which they are caught. And all this talk about liberation is a terrible mirror of the fact that people are prisoners, they just have different cells they're in. There's no way out. I'll tell you something. We're going to meet a liberated lady named Lydia. And you know what happened to her when she got liberated? When she got liberated her liberation was content to be what God designed her to be and that's being liberated. You are liberated when you are free to accept yourself with full acceptance as God designed you to be. That's being free.

And Lydia, the liberated lady, was free. There's only one kind of liberation and Jesus put it this way, He said, "Ye shall know the truth and" what? "The truth shall make you free." There's no other liberation. Paul said, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you", what? "Free" There's only one kind of liberation. And if a person really wants to be liberated then he comes to Jesus Christ,

he is liberated from sin and death and Satan and hell and he's free to accept all the eternal blessings of God and to accept himself as God made him and be content to be what God designed him to be, that's liberation.

Now, I want us to look at these two ladies. First of all the transfigured woman. Next week the disfigured woman. A transfigured woman. Look at this dear lady and we'll have to kind of work up to it at the end of verse 12; "...we were in the city abiding certain days." Now notice that this was the city of Philippi, a chief city of that part of Macedonia and a colony. Now the 'a chief city', protos or leading city, the definite article is not there or it would better be translated a chief city or the leading city, this is a very important city. We don't know all of the aspects of its importance but he indicated here that it was important. One of the reasons it was important was it was located on what was called the Egnatian Highway, starts with an 'E'. Now the Egnatian Highway was one of those massive Roman accomplishments, it was a road 490 miles long. Now that would have been built by hand. The Roman had - The Romans had built this road as a military access to the east. It ran from the western coast of Macedonia on the Adriatic Sea to across Macedonia to the Aegean Sea up and then right across the top area there and it went right through Philippi. So Philippi was a very important area. It was an area where there was much traffic and trade and military movement. Incidentally that road was built in about 146 B.C. Another footnote on that, if you took the Egnatian west you'd finally hit the Adriatic Sea. You take a boat across the Adriatic Sea and it would connect up with another road in Italy called the Appian Way which you may be familiar with. Well, that was one long extension of highway just separated by two of those little, that little sea the Adriatic and the Aegean. And so they were well-known geographical areas.

Now notice that it says it was a colony, verse 12. That is the only city in the book of Acts which is called a colony. There are six colonies mentioned but this is the only one called a colony. You say, - Well, what's a Roman colony? Well a Roman colony was really ruled, in a sense, very loosely by the Roman Government. And incidentally, the fall of the Roman Empire came because they were too generous. If you're going to hold an Empire together it's going to have to be run by a dictator. That's why Nebuchadnezzar's Empire was so strong because he ran it with a rod of iron. And that's why in the Kingdom when Jesus rules He's going to rule the same way, central authority. Whenever you divide the authority up you get iron and clay mixed like the image of Daniel and that was the fall of the Roman Empire. Well they allowed these colonies to have three things; first of all libertas which meant self-government, secondly, immunitas which meant that they didn't pay tribute to the Emperor and thirdly eosaticum which meant they had the rights of Roman citizens. Well they were so generous in giving them these things that they really became like a little Rome. And every city was ruled by guys called praetors or magistrates, they were the head mucky-mucks and under them was a group of people called lectors which were police and they walked around with clubs beating up the people the magistrates told them to hit. Now in verse 22 it says they did it to Paul and Silas, the magistrates, you know, caught Paul and Silas there and we'll find out about that next week and they commanded the lectors to beat them with their little rods. So really this was kind of imitating the Roman pattern and

Ephesus was like a little Rome.

Well, here was the gospel landing in a little piece of Rome. You say, Boy, I'll bet they make a dent in that town. What do they do? Well, they didn't do anything, first of all. Verse 12 says they just hung around for a few days. You say, - What are they waiting for? Ah, my personal belief is they're waiting for Saturday. Why? Saturday was the Sabbath. When Paul went into a town where did he first go? The synagogues. Now he went to the synagogues, I told you, for several reasons, one reason - he went to the Jews first because if he went to the Gentiles the Jews would never take him. So he went to them first. Number-two, he went to the Jews because they would have a hearing for him there and a place to speak because he was Jewish and a Pharisee. Thirdly, he went to the Jews because if he could win some of them to Christ they could help him evangelize the Gentiles. So his custom was to go to the synagogue, however, in Philippi there was no synagogue. It took ten men to make a synagogue, a minian it was called, ten men. There weren't ten men. In fact, as far as I can tell there weren't any men. You say, - You mean that the whole gospel spread in Europe is going to begin with a bunch of women? Listen, my dear friend, the gospel spread all over the world has been beginning with women for years. Just check out the nearest list of missionaries that you have and find out. In Christ there is neither male nor female. There's no reason for a Christian to get involved with women's lib, it's an inconsequential issue, of course there's equality in the sight of God.

Now let's go on, look what happened "On the Sabbath day", here's that we again, Luke's talking, "we went out of the city by a riverside". See, they waited till the Sabbath. "Where prayer was accustomed to be made, we sat down and spoke unto the women which resorted there." Apparently there weren't even any men. They couldn't have a synagogue. These were exiled Jews. There's a sad thing, you know, they loved their temple, they didn't have that. And you remember when they had been carried off into Babylon they founded those places called synagogues, remember Psalm 137, they sat by the rivers of Babylon and yes, we wept, it says in Psalm 137. And here were some exiled and only women, no men to lead them, no men to teach them. But they faithfully met. And look, they had a place of prayer and the Greek is prosukee and it means a place of prayer. They had a set aside place. Maybe they had a little brush arbor built, maybe they just had a grove of trees, maybe they had a little wall, I don't know but they were there. And it was the same place that they were accustomed in going. Now apparently Paul had found out where the Jewish people met, he had found out there was no synagogue and they had a little prosukee, a place of prayer, down by the river. Why by the river? Well, they always put them by the river. One of the most important things the Jews did in their worship was ceremonial cleansing was it not? And here they would have access to the water. And so they had a little place by the river. Even as they had in the country of Babylon, gone down by the river and hung up their harps and wept. And so the river was the place that they met. Well, here is a little gathering of ladies. You say, - Well, that's not a very exciting beginning. Oh, but you don't know that one lady, Lydia.

Well, let's find out what happened. I believe, friends, that this is one of the most beautiful stories of the liberation of women that has been brought about by Jesus Christ. Women in the world - and whether you're talking about Greek women, Roman women or any kind of pagan women, women were looked upon as slaves. If a man didn't like his breakfast he had a right to kill his wife without recourse. You've thought of it but it wouldn't be possible in our society. No woman, now watch, no woman had the right to exchange her religion for another one apart from her husband. That was absolutely unheard of. Men so dominated women that any kind of an unruly woman cast terrible, terrible defamation on a husband. And one of the biggest problems of Christianity was this that in Christ there was no male and no female and a woman could come to Jesus Christ and be totally liberated independent of her husband's desires. And, boy, did that cause problems. Oh, a lot of women were getting saved and these husbands were getting uptight. Some of their friends would come along and say, - Well, I hear your wife joined that - that Christian thing over there. Man, you sure don't have any control over your women. Oh, that was bad defamation of character, hard to handle. And, you know, that was really behind the scenes when Peter wrote I Peter chapter 3. Have you read that chapter? Where Peter instructs saved women how to win their unsaved husbands? Not by talking all the time. Not by preaching at them but by living such a Godly life that they can't resist it. Why? Because this was a tremendous problem. Paul alludes to the problem in I Cor. 7 when he talks about the unbeliever who can't hack Christianity and finally just departs. And Paul says if he wants to depart let him depart. And so this created a tremendous problem but it was all because of the liberation of women. And do you know that even among some of the Jews women were seen as slaves? You know, Paul was raised a Pharisee, if he was a Pharisee you know what he had to recite? For a great part of his life? This prayer; Oh, God, I thank Thee that I am neither a Gentile, a slave or a woman. That's right. Some people have accused Paul of being anti-woman, being a male chauvinist. That is ridiculous. He just simply said, the way that I move around it's better not to be married. He's right. He's right. The Lord knew that.

But Christ liberates women. For the first time here was a religion and I hate to use that word but we'll use it. Here was a religion where a woman could choose totally and independently from the thought and desire of her husband if need be. Christ liberates.

Now as we come to verse 14 let's see the first lady that we meet. Now they sat down and they spoke to the women. "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira which worshipped God heard; whose heart the Lord opened that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul, "And when she was baptized and her household she besought us saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us."

Now her name is Lydia. Lydia is also the name of the area she came from. So she's Lydia from Lydia. Lydia the Lydian. Lydia was an area in Asia Minor and in that little area was the city of Thyatira. Thyatira was a very important place biblically because the church was placed there, wasn't it? According to Revelation. But in archaeological studies they have determined also that there was a

large Jewish synagogue there. And here was a Gentile lady who while she was living in Thyatira had become a God-fearer, that is she had turned to the God of Israel. Here was a Gentile lady, then, who was worshipping God. It says it right there. And she got started, likely, in the city of Thyatira because there was according to archaeological findings a very significant synagogue there. Incidentally, Thyatira was famous for purple dye. Homer in the Iliad says the art of the women in Thyatira and the area is the art of dyeing with purple. So we have historical evidence that this woman came from the right place and she did what the women in that area did. Now they had a most interesting trade. There were two kinds of dyes they used. The first kind was for the rich people. You know, most of the purple stuff was for, you know, royalty and all that. And they use to extract this purple dye drop by drop from a little thing called a murex which was a shellfish. And they would catch these shellfish and they would extract drop by drop this precious purple dye and really super rich people would have purple dye from the murex shellfish for their garments. And like everything, once the elite get it all of us peons want to get in on the thing, so the next thing you know they had to come up with a second class dye and they got it from an extraction from a madder root and they used that for the commoner's dye. Well, she was in this business. And she was the one that the Lord had in mind, unbelievable, as Paul's first convert in Europe. God was going to begin the work with a woman. Now if you ever get the idea that God second classes women, get rid of it. Never - never - never.

Now watch, I want to show you several things that happened in the liberation of Lydia. Incidentally, I want you to know this, a footnote, when she got saved, God didn't say - Now that you're saved, get rid of your business and go home - do the dishes. Didn't say that. Didn't say that at all. God loves an enterprising woman. Ladies, one chapter that you really ought to get in your head is Proverbs 31. You ought to know that chapter because that tells what God thinks about an enterprising woman. God wants a woman to be as creative and as enterprising as she can possibly be as long as it never affects the responsibility she has to a husband and a home. And it can be done. Read it, Proverbs 31, it's all there. You have to get up in the middle of the night, though. It says it right there, Proverbs 31. I woke my wife up at three this morning and said - You overslept.

All right, so God is not against enterprising women. Now watch this, first thing about Lydia that is really remarkable in her conversion and gives us a sequence of salvation that may be helpful to us is that she feared God. Look at verse 14, it says that this lady worshipped God. Now this means she had already turned from paganism. If she would have been in a polytheistic kind of typical Greek God culture and somewhere along the line had turned to the true God. Now this is the beginning of her liberation. The beginning of her freedom. She was a slave to sin, to Satan, to Hell to death and then she turned to the true God, she saw revealed among the people of Israel. She became what we call in the technical term a God-fearer which is a Gentile which turns to the God of Israel. And we've seen that repeatedly in the book of Acts. And there was step one in her liberation. She sought to know God. Beloved, that's the beginning of salvation. That's the beginning. Now let me remind you of this, she didn't do this independent of God, no- no. Romans 3:11 says, "No man seeks after God." God had drawn her to Him. God had drawn her. And she was moving already seeking God. And she

plugged into Judaism. Now already Jesus had lived, died, rose and ascended into heaven, the gospel was signed, sealed and delivered and she was a pagan, she didn't know the gospel but she was seeking to know God. People always say, - Oh, what about the heathen who never hear? Listen to me, the simple principle that we've seen over and over again in the book of Acts, with the Ethiopian eunuch, Cornelius and Lydia is if there is a pagan who in his heart honestly seeks to know God, God will reveal Himself in the fullness of the gospel to that individual. Don't worry about God, He knows exactly what He is doing. And He knows exactly where the seeking hearts are. Listen to this, John 7:17, You ought to know this, Jesus was, you know, nose to nose with some Pharisees who were laying it on Him and they were talking about how to know whether Jesus was for real or not. How do you really know He's who He claims to be? And this is what He said, "If any man", if who? "Any man", no qualifications, "If any man wills to do God's will he shall know of the doctrine whether I speak concerning Myself or whether I really be of God." What is it saying? It's saying if there's a willing, seeking heart God will never shut Himself off from that heart. I don't care whether it's in Thyatira, Philippi or the darkest part of the central area of Africa, if there's a seeking heart God will move heaven and earth to get to that seeking heart. You say, - Why all of this to get to her? She was a seeking heart. Can you imagine, - I mean, He closed out the whole area of Asia? Don't go to Ephesus. Don't go to Asia. Don't go to Bithynia. Go there and He just kept pushing and they got down there - and what do we do here? Here's a seeking lady. You hear - these are four pretty important people, Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy and they're running a little thin line wandering through all these countries just to get to one lady. Well that's what God will do to get to a seeking heart. Don't you worry about that guy in Africa who hasn't got a missionary there if he's a seeker God will get him one or God will reveal it to him somehow. God never lets anyone who wants to know His will come up empty. And I'll tell you something, friend, that's true in your Christian life too. If you really want to know His will it's available. As God told Israel through Moses He said this; "If thou shalt seek the Lord thy God thou shalt find Him", watch, "if thou shalt seek Him with all thy heart and all thy soul." God will always meet a seeking heart. Listen to Psalm 119:2, I just love it, it says this; "Blessed are they that seek Him with the whole heart." Sure. Do you ever read Hosea 6:3? It says this; "Thou shalt know if thou follow on to know the Lord." Isn't that a beautiful thought? You'll know, if you pursue the knowledge of the Lord.

And so she was a seeker and God never turns down a seeker. Second thing, she not only sought she listened. Oh, is that important. She listened. Look at the indication. "She worshipped God", what's the next word? "Heard" You know, some people have ears but they don't hear. I always think of the situation of Paul on the Damascus road fell down and everybody kept hearing sounds but couldn't make out the voice. That's like most people. They hear without hearing. You know, while Jesus was on earth He encountered the hypocrites, all of them - the Pharisee - Well, we - we have God who teaches us. And you know what? They didn't hear anything. They were like guys who went to a concert or a great musical extravagant production and they had on blinders and earmuffs. They had no idea what was going on. They didn't see the truth when He stood in their presence and when He spoke they never heard Him. They heard His words but they didn't hear with faith, did they? Matthew

13 is so important in what it says in response to this, listen; "Jesus said, For whosoever hath shall he be given and he shall have more abundance and whosoever has not from him shall be taken away what he has", this is an indictment to the Pharisees who thought they had a lot, then He said this, "Therefore speak I unto them in parables". He says - I talk to them in parables. Why? "Because they seeing see not and hearing hear not neither do they understand." And they're fulfilling prophecy, Isaiah said, "By hearing you shall hear and not understand and seeing and you shall not perceive." You say, - But why? I mean, how could they be in the presence of Christ and not hear? Verse 15, - "Their heart is fat," it's gross, it's evil is what it means. "Their ears of dull of hearing, their eyes they have closed lest at any time they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart and be converted and I should heal them." Then He looks at the ignorant disciples and says - "Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear." You know that same Isaiah passage is quoted at the very end of the book of Acts? Paul was talking to the Jews, he says - "Well, he said, Isaiah said, verse 26, Go to the people and say hearing you shall hear and not understand, seeing you shall see and not perceive." Do you know that Isaiah predicted the rejection of Israel? "For the heart of His people is fat, their ears are dull, their eyes are closed, they can't hear and they can't understand so they can be converted etc...be it known therefore, verse 28, that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles", I love this, "And they will hear it." Israel wouldn't hear, God sent them out to the Gentiles and here's goes Paul - God says here's a lady and she's ready and she'll listen. Paul preaches and she heard it. And the implication, beloved, is that she heard it with faith. Faith comes by what? Hearing. And the actual Greek of that verse in Romans is Faith comes by hearing a speech about Jesus. We translate it faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. That is not correct translation, Faith comes by hearing and hearing by a speech about Jesus.

Now she heard, she heard. You know, the people didn't hear and there's a reason. They were dull of hearing. Well, you say, what made them so dull of hearing? Well, Jesus answered it in many places but one of them is John 8, listen; He says "Why don't you understand My speech?" Verse 43, Why don't listen to verse 44; "Because you are of your father, the devil", you see, and there is no truth in him but when he speaks lies you listen because you're plugged in to that kind of stuff. Then He says in verse 45, "And when I tell you the truth you don't hear Me." You are only in the wavelengths of lies, you can't recognize truth. Oh, wow, that is some indictment.

Well, blessed Lydia, she wasn't like that. I mean, she heard, she heard. Some people never get to step one. They don't seek God to begin with and then when the opportunity comes they don't hear. Do you really know what God is saying? She did. Third thing about her; she not only sought and she not only heard but then God opened her heart. Look at verse 14, "Whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Attended means she responded to them. She put her faith in Christ. Why? Because the Lord had opened her heart. Do you know - salvation is of the Lord did you know that? That's what the Bible says. You didn't open yours and say Oh, I opened my heart to the Lord. No. No. You couldn't pry your heart open if you had the biggest crowbar in the world. You can't do that. Who opened your heart? It says it right there. The Lord opened your

heart. You know, people say to me - John, don't you get discouraged? If people don't respond and they don't open their hearts to the gospel? I say - No, that's not my job. If I thought somebody's salvation depended on me I'd go crazy. Do you know what I mean by that? If I thought whether people were going to make it into heaven was dependent on me and how well I presented things I would go stark raving mad. Salvation isn't dependent on John MacArthur, I'll tell you, it's dependent on God. He's the one who does the opening. You say, - Oh, I don't know about that. Listen, listen, I tell you - I Cor. 3 - I'll give you a verse. Listen to this; "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" You say, Who said that? Who would run them down? Paul wrote that. Paul, big deal, Apollos, big deal. They're just ministers, they're nothing. "I've planted and Apollos watered" and what? "God gave the increase." Next verse; "Then neither is he that plants anything neither he that waters but God is everything, who gives the increase." That's the point. God opened her heart. Don't ever forget, beloved, evangelism isn't your work it's God's work. You know, I can't open a heart. Boy, you know people think of all kinds of gimmicks to get people to respond. No, no, no. Let me give you a little footnote about evangelism that I think is crucial. The most important thing in evangelism, this is it, it is not a clever approach. And there's - I've seen all kinds of them. It is not how fast you can whip through the gospel before the guy has a chance to say anything and you've got him saved and he doesn't know it. It is not how emotional you are and so forth. It is not what a salesman you are. You know what the most important thing in the presentation of the gospel is? Just get it - one word - clarity. Clarity of content. You say, - Why? Because it is God who opens the heart, if God does the preparing of the seeking heart and God opens the ears that they may hear and God's going to open the heart, all you need to do is give the clear content so that God can open the heart in response to the truth. You got it? You got that? Simple. You go through the book of Acts and you never hear Paul say, - Let's just sing another verse. Now that's fine, I'm not against that but that is not the heartbeat of evangelism. You know, we always talk about evangelism like it's an emotional decision, it is not. It is God's work in the heart of an individual. And the most important thing we can do is give proper content so that God has the content with which He can open the heart. Do you see? And you go through the book of Acts and what are they doing all through the book of Acts? They're speaking about Christ. They're reasoning and opening and alleging out of the Scriptures and they're talking about the resurrection and they're giving a recitation of historical fact concerning who Christ was and what the gospel is. And they leave the heart opening to God. And, believe me friends, that is evangelism. Evangelism is me giving somebody the content which God can use in their already prepared heart to open it up. Do you see what I'm saying? And so whenever we evangelize it must be with the fullness of understanding. That's why some of us can't remember when we were saved because we got dribbles of the gospel and we don't know when we really understood enough of it to be saved. And you know I think sometimes we don't give the gospel good enough for the unbelievers to reject it. There are some people who aren't prepared and I think we've got a lot of them making some kind of a decision about something they don't even understand. Well, you can read through the book of Acts yourself starting with chapter 2 and you'll find they preached the Word, they taught the gospel. Chapter 4, chapter 5, chapter 8, chapter 10, 13, 16, 17 right on out to the end it says they

declared Christ, they preached Christ, they spoke of Christ, they opened and alleged out of the Scriptures, they reasoned with them, they studied with them, they went home and studied again, and all of this. It's always content, content, content. And when the time comes right and man understands the content God has the ability then to open his heart.

This lady heard the facts which is all she needed because she was a ready vessel and God opened the heart. And she was liberated. You know, it's God who works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, isn't it? And all we need to do in evangelism is to make that possible. Well, she was saved. The Lord did it. And, you know, I thrill because people - we don't always have a whole lot of people streaming forward and getting saved but I know people are getting saved because I know God's opening hearts. And it may not always be dramatic and it may not always be emotional but it's happening. Sometimes it may be and I'm not against emotion, I mean, I get emotional. And when I say you give content you don't say - Now sit down and I will recite the gospel. No. No. It ought to be alive, exciting and thrilling and you ought to be as emotional about it as you want to be but you ought to give the content along with it. That's important.

Well, let's go. "Then she was baptized", verse 15, "And when she was baptized", isn't that interesting that that's just assumed, it doesn't say then they all - then they all had a big discussion about whether she ought to be baptized? No. That was assumed because that was the outward statement of her identification with Christ so she was baptized.. I love this. She must have been a lovely lady and she must have had a tremendous influence because not only did they baptize her but they baptized her whole household. You know, this sixteenth chapter of Acts is the household chapter. The next person that gets saved is the jailor and he gets saved and his whole house. You say, What's God doing? God's building an instant church in Philippi, a couple of households. She was saved and her whole household. You know, your influence is tremendous particularly with your own household. Isn't it? It speaks well of Lydia, doesn't it? It speaks well of Lydia that she would believe something and they would look up to her so much that what she believed she would be eager to hear. Well, of course, we know that apart from the human thing, God was in it as well obviously. But nevertheless she believed, her whole house believed and together they were baptized. What a glorious beginning. You say, - Just that little old household and that lady was the beginning of the church in Philippi? Yes it was, a local church. You want to know something? Lydia's house became the place where the church meets. Look at verse 40; "They went out of the prison and returned entered into the house of Lydia and when they had seen the brethren they comforted them and departed." Now the church met in Lydia's house. So Lydia became a leader in the church. The little prosukee by the river became God's ekklesia, God's church in Philippi. You say, - But it was only women. Well, no. You can't have a church without men. Who's going to be the deacons and elders? Now, ladies, you can make that concession. Women are important in the church but the lead and the rule of the church belongs to the men. You say, - Well, where are the men? Ah, they're there, verse 40. I don't know - they must have been in Lydia's household and the jailor and maybe his household. They went out of the prison and went into the house of Lydia where they had seen the what? The brethren, there's got to be some

men, that's a collective term but if it was only women they wouldn't have used brethren. So there were some men there. But you know, what's interesting. In later date, that little church that began with that group of women, some of those women still wanted to run things. They did. That's too bad but they did. You say, - How do you know that, John? Well, it's in the Bible. Phil. chapter 4, you know Paul loved the church at Philippi, he just loved them so much. Look at chapter 1 for a minute verse 3; he says, Phil. 1; "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." He says, I'm just so excited about all of you, "For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day", what was the first day? We've Just been there, haven't we? For that first day by the river. Oh, did he love them. But he says, You've got one problem named Euodias and Syntyche, both ladies. Verse 1, pardon me, verse 2 of chapter 4, "I beseech Euodias and beseech Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord." Now he says, I'm going to ask you true-yoke-fellow, the Greek is *suzugos* and it is likely a proper name so he says, *Suzugos*, help those ladies, get that issue straightened out. Here were a couple of women who were problematic. Now there's no hierarchy in the body of Christ, men and women, male and female are one in Christ. But in the church the men are set to put things in order. So he says to this man, *Suzugos*, you take charge over these women and get them together. They are dear women who labored with Clement and with me in the gospel.

Well, here was the founding of a beautiful little group of believers and Lydia was right at the heart of it. I want to show you something wonderful. Look at it, verse 15, I Just love this; "And when she was baptized and her household, she besought us saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord". In other words, If you think my salvation is real. That is the Greek term there that is used, faithful to the Lord - is used - is translated often - to believe. If you've really judged that I'm a true believer and I'm for real, "come on into my house and abide there." You want to know something? You want to know how I know that's a liberated lady? There's a lady who was busy working on all kinds of enterprises. She came to meet Jesus Christ and got liberated and said, Come on in I want to make a home for you. That's a liberated lady. She gave evidence of her salvation by the desire to be in the place that God designed her to be. Isn't that beautiful? There's not a higher calling in the world, ladies, then being in the place where God designed you to be. Believe me, she gave evidence of the genuineness of her liberation. You know why? She went home. That's liberation. Come on in, she said, and hospitality. And, boy, did she put it on. She even constrained them. The word constrain is an interesting word, it's a forceful word. It's only used one other time in the New Testament and that is the time when Jesus was walking with those two disciples on the Emmaus Road and they kept constraining Him, same word, to come to their house and abide with them. She really laid it on, come, you're really going to stay here now, you know how ladies can do, you know. You're not going - and so forth. That's hospitality. And we're going to stop there because I want to give you a biblical view of hospitality before we go on to lady number two. But I just want you to see what liberation really is.

Dear ladies, don't be discontent with God's marvelous plan and that which He has designed for you - that - when you experience full joy in that you're liberated. And it's only Jesus Christ that can free you

from the true prison to be content to be what He designed you to be. Let's pray.

Father, thank You again for this time together. We just cherish every dear lady in this congregation, every young girl, every grandmother, every single woman even, Lord, that all of them might be all that Jesus designed them to be in purity and loveliness. Enterprising - yes and caring about those things that are needful in regard to her place as a woman.

Father, we thank You that liberation doesn't come from any of the false standards of the world that it comes only from Jesus Christ in whom we are free indeed. And in whose name we pray. Amen.

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