



Cases of Conversion: Conversion of the Lydia

In three verses Luke documents the conversion of Lydia to Jesus Christ saying,

“And on the Sabbath day we went...to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ So she persuaded us” (Acts 16:13-15)

The conversion of Lydia is only shortly discussed in Luke’s account of the Activities of the Apostles. Yet, it provides the reader with a poignant example of the basic steps involved in God’s plan to save mankind through Jesus Christ.

First, note that Lydia is not suffering from “total depravity” and this is the reason why the Lord needs to open her heart. She was in Philippi, away from her hometown of Thyatira, worshipping with others on the Sabbath (Acts 16:14). The text clearly says she was a woman “who worshiped God” (16:15). Since it was the Sabbath, Lydia is evidently a devout Jew.

Second, notice that God used an agent to open the heart of Lydia—Paul and Luke, God’s spokesmen. Verse 13 documents Paul and Luke sitting down and speaking to the women. Verse 14 says “Lydia heard us.” The latter part of the verse moves from hearing to heeding. Lydia is moved to action by their words.

The message of Jesus Christ touches her heart and “she and her household were baptized” (16:15). After this, she immediately shows hospitality to the traveling apostles by opening her home to them (16:15). The gospel is preached. Lydia hears. The Lord opens her heart by the word as she believes and is baptized. She immediately devotes herself to a new life of fellowship.

by Joshua R. Welch