

LYDIA: CALLED TO SERVE

Bible Background – ACTS 16;11-15,40; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-30

Printed Text – ACTS 16;11-15,40; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-30

Lydia of Philippi Believes in Jesus

¹¹ We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis.

¹² From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days.

¹³ On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there.

¹⁴ One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying.

¹⁵ She and her household were baptized, and she asked us to be her guests. “If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my home.” And she urged us until we agreed.

⁴⁰ When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they

met with the believers and encouraged them once more. Then they left town.

1 Corinthians 1

²⁶ Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you.

²⁷ Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful.

²⁸ God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important.

²⁹ As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

³⁰ God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin.

-----New Living Translation

Lesson Introduction

God equipped Lydia with the gift of hospitality, and she used her skills and her place in society to support Paul’s ministry. She was willing and eager to faithfully use what God had given her to support the ministry. As we study how Lydia fulfilled her calling, let us be mindful to avoid dismissing those who may have had different opportunities and fewer advantages and learn to serve others joyfully with whatever means are available to us.

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Background: After Paul and Barnabas' successful journey planting many churches in Syria and surrounding provinces, a new journey to plant churches was planned—this time throughout the Roman province of Asia, Paul and Silas set out from Antioch and were joined by Timothy while visiting a previously established church in Lystra. Soon after, the Holy spirit deflected the group's plans to go into Asia and guided the men instead to Macedonia. At this point, Luke (the writer of Acts) joined the team too, and they set sail from the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea. After meeting Lydia, the team stays in Philippi preaching. They cast a demon out of a slave girl and her masters provoked an uproar that ended with Paul and Silas in jail. When an earthquake opened the chains of every cell in the prison and the jailer was about to kill himself, Paul and Silas led the man to Christ instead. Paul and Silas benefited from the hospitality of wealthy converts, but Paul also knew that most Christians did not have much worldly wealth or status to boast of. He wrote to the Corinthian church to show how God uses that fact to His advantage so Christians should feel no shame in their lowly status.

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2020-2021, p. 304

The Ministry at Philippi

Acts 16:11-13: The team of disciples had a straight course or 'smooth sailing' to their first stop after leaving Troas. Traveling on, they reached Philippi. Philippi was part of a large colony that was part of the Roman Empire. It was inhabited mostly by Roman citizens and those who lived there were protected by Roman law. This was a different type of community from the others they had visited before. There was no synagogue. This indicated that there were not at least ten Jewish male adults living there. So, unlike previous journeys into new territory, they knew no one in the land; no one greeted them; and there was no Sabbath meeting at a community synagogue.

Therefore, on the Sabbath, the missionary team was drawn to a gathering of women praying and worshiping God beside a river, outside the city. They were not put off by the circumstances and did not hesitate to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to this group of God-fearing, worshiping women. These women became the first European converts to the Christian faith demonstrating that women's work and worship is not incidental, but an integral part of the history of the growth of Christ's Church.

◆*Where have you seen women take the initiative to start a gathering when men could not or did not do so?*

The Conversion of Lydia

Acts 16:14-15,40: A certain woman, Lydia, we are told is from Thyatira, a city of commerce in Asia Minor that was well-known for its dyer's guild and textiles. We are not told why she is living in Philippi which is nearly 400 miles away. She is likely a widow since she has in her own home. She is a "seller of purple", either the dye or the cloth both of which were highly valued and used for official Roman garments. She would have been considered a successful professional but clearly valued worship above all else. Lydia is a Greek name, so she was probably a Gentile who worshiped the One True God, which implies that she was a Jewish proselyte. She worshiped God according to the knowledge that she had and welcomed the opportunity to hear the apostles preach of Jesus the Messiah, God's Son. It is

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important to worship God the Father, but we must believe in Jesus Christ the Son for there is no coming to God except through Jesus the mediator.

Lydia's response to hearing the Gospel was to get baptized—she and her entire household. Her household probably consisted of her family members and servants. This also marked the beginning of the Philippian church. She extended hospitality to her new family in Christ, the apostles. She had accommodations for Paul and his companions and insisted that they stay at her home for the duration of their time in the colony. Because of her hospitality, her neighbors also had the opportunity to receive more teaching and preaching of the Good News and to share in the discipleship and fellowship of the new Christian community.

After leading many to Christ in Philippi, Paul and Silas were arrested. A complaint that they were teaching things illegal under Roman law was lodged against them. They were imprisoned which led to “singing praises in chains, a midnight earthquake, and the conversion of the jailer and his whole family.” They were released and Lydia welcomed them back into her home with no regard for the risk that may have come from associating with those considered to be troublemakers. She stood with God's men no matter what others in the city may have thought.

◆ *What effort have you made to lead your family and close friends to Christ?*

The Wisdom of the Cross

1 Corinthians 1:26-28: Even though Lydia used what she had and offered them as service to those who were on a mission from God, we want to remember that God can use those who, by the world's standards appear to have very little. The Corinthians thought that they had wisdom, strength and social standing to offer God. Paul reminds them, in these verses, that in light of God's power, they have nothing. After all, the history of Israel is full of instances of God using the most unlikely people and providing what they need to serve Him. The entire nation of Israel was born of an infertile couple. Israel's second king was anointed as a youth, the youngest of seven brothers to depose what appeared to be a mighty king. God uses what is considered lowly to bring about amazing things and to make a difference in our world.

◆ *How has God used the weaknesses in your life to show His glory?*

The Benefits of the Cross

1 Corinthians 1:29-30: Why does God choose the lowly? Paul says so that no one should boast in His presence. In all things, the only one who deserves glory is God. All blessings that we possess come from God initially so if we do well, it is only because God has allowed it. The entire plan of redemption was orchestrated by God. He is in total possession of every good thing and the one thing that He wants is us. He shows us that He can do everything but reminds us that He does it all to restore a full relationship with us, His creation.

◆ *How have you expressed your gratitude for all God has done for you?*

Conclusion

Through Lydia's successful trade of purple, God equipped her to perform the task of hospitality. She jumped at the opportunity to make use of the spirit of hospitality that God had placed within her. Let us commit to serving others with joy and thanksgiving that God allows us to use whatever we have, great or small, to glorify Him.

Sources:

Banks, M. (Ed.). (2020). Call in the New Testament. *Precepts for Living*, 23(Winter Quarter), 300-312. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021.
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Lesson for Next Week – March 7 – Study Guide 14

MOSES: PROPHET OF DEIVERANCE

Bible Background ♦ EXODUS 12:28-50; DEUTERONOMY 18:15-22

Printed Text ♦ DEUTEROMONY 18:15-22

Devotional Reading ♦ PSALM 77:11-20

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Remember God's acts of Deliverance
(Psalm 77:11-20)

TUESDAY

Listen to Moses: Witness with Authority
(Luke 16:24-31)

WEDNESDAY

Instructions for Observing the Passover
(Exodus 12:43-50)

THURSDAY

Aliens and Unclean Share Passover Meal
(Numbers 9:9-14)

FRIDAY

Consecrate All Firstborn to God
(Exodus 13:1-2; Deuteronomy 15:19-20)

SATURDAY

Observe Festival of Unleavened Bread
(Exodus 13:3-10)

SUNDAY

God Leads through Prophets
(Deuteronomy 18:15-22)