



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Basic Bible Doctrine, Acts 16:11-15

"Calling, Regeneration and Faith"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Thank Thee again Lord for Thy word and for the wonderful truths that are contained within it that concern us. We thank Thee for the way in which Thou hast given us insight into the plans and purposes of the Triune God throughout the ages. We thank Thee for the way Thou hast dealt with us in wonderful grace, and we pray again, as we study Thy word that it may truly lighten our paths and enable us to find our way through this wilderness world in which Thou hast placed us.

We remember that the patriarchs of old were strangers and sojourners on the earth, and we know that it is our calling to be just that kind of representative of our great God in heaven. Enable us to serve Thee well, in a manner that will be pleasing to Thee. We pray that Thou wilt give us direction through the Scriptures. We know the sufficiency of them. And we pray that in all of the experiences of life, they may be our food, and our strength, and our sustenance.

We ask that Thou would give us direction tonight as we consider some of the important truths that have to do with our salvation. Now Lord, we ask Thy blessing upon this hour and also in the classes in the hours that follow. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight we continue our series of studies on basic Bible doctrine and we're turning to consider the subject of "Calling, Regeneration and Faith." And as a passage for our Scripture reading, a passage that we shall look at in some detail later on, let us turn to Acts chapter 16 and let me read verses 11 through 15. In some ways, this is one of the most remarkable little sections in the whole of the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles. It has to do with the conversation of Lydia. We read in verse 11 of Acts chapter 16, the apostle is on his second missionary journey, remember?

"Therefore," Luke writes, "loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath," (That's not the Sunday, that's on the Saturday.) "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was a custom to be made; and we sat down, and spoke unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto 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."

In our last study we considered the doctrine of divine election and so it's natural to turn to calling, regeneration, and faith with the question in our minds, how and why do we come to Christ? The answer is not easy. Consider it from the standpoint of the history of theology. How and why do we come to Christ? Many answers have been given to that question and they have to do really with the understanding of the biblical doctrine of grace. For example, the Pelagian followers of Pelagius, that British monk who came to Rome as a preacher of morals in the days of Augustine. The Pelagians who have

followed him say and in answer to the question, how and why do we come to Christ, I come by myself; that is they deny grace altogether. They are descendants of fallen man and they think that there rest in the power of fallen man the power to come to God.

Now you know that later on Pelagianism, which is really legalism in personal guise, Pelagianism came to be modified because of its obvious unscriptural character. So the result was shortly after the conflict between Pelagius and Augustine was settled in favor of Augustine, there arose in the Roman church and this doctrine is permeated many, many churches including many of the Bible churches today. They are filled with this. The doctrine is semi-Pelagianism.

Now semi-Pelagianism is a doctrine that is held by believers in Christ. Now in my opinion, they are confused believers in Christ. I think that's the general opinion of orthodox theologians who have thought through these issues, but nevertheless, they are confused. They are Christians. They are confused. Their answer to the question, how and why do we come to Christ is, I wanted to come and God helped me. Now you can see that there is bound up in Semi-Pelagianism is the doctrine of the freedom of the human will. The Semi-Pelagian denies prevenient grace but he admits cooperative grace if man first chooses to come. In other words, the basic decision that one makes is the decision to turn of one's own free will to the Lord. Once we have turned of our own free will toward the Lord, then the Lord supplies grace and we cooperate with it and come to Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

Semi-Pelagianism has afflicted, I'd say, many of the Bible churches all over the country. The doctrine of the freedom of the will is characteristic of semi-Pelagianism. So when you hear someone say, I do believe in Jesus Christ but I believe in the freedom of the will, or when you say I believe in salvation by grace but I believe in the freedom of the will, then you have the components of semi-Pelagianism thought to be heretical down through the centuries, but it has come to exist in so many of our churches. And since we're not

living in a day in which theology is preached and taught, it exists as a heresy within the bosom of professing Christian churches.

I don't deny, as I have often said to you, that such people truly believe that they believe in the grace of God. They very strongly say, we are saved by grace, but at the same time, they just as strongly say, we believe in free will. They have never been able to see or have never had it pointed out to them that the doctrine of the grace of God and the doctrine of the freedom of the will are in basic contradiction. That if a man truly believes in the doctrine of the freedom of the will and that the decision to turn to Christ is a doctrine of one's own free will, he doesn't really believe in the grace of God. It should be obvious to us that if there's a man sitting over here and a man sitting over here, and the gospel is preached and one responds and one does not, if the reason is because one has made a decision out of his own free will, it's obvious that there is something in that one person that is not in this person. Whatever we want to call it, it is that which caused him to respond positively to the gospel.

Now then his salvation depends not only on what Christ did, but on what Christ did plus what ever it was in him that caused him of his own free will to respond to the gospel, which was not in the other person so that they did not respond to the gospel; so that ultimately salvation depends upon the work of God as well as a work of man. Semi-Pelegianism; I wanted to come and God helped me.

The Arminian is not strictly speaking a semi-Pelegian, although there are certain things that are similar. The Arminian, the followers of James Arminius, the Dutch Calvinist, incidentally, Arminius died a member and a minister of the reformed church. But nevertheless, he introduced certain teaching that came to be full blown Arminianism after his death. The Arminians say God gave me sufficient grace to come because Christ died and I cooperated. Arminians admit the total depravity of man. They admit that naturally we would never have responded. Naturally we are unable to respond. They have believed like the Calvinists in the inability of man, but the Arminians believe that the

result of Jesus Christ's death on the cross two thousand years ago now, God gave by virtue of what Christ did all men sufficient grace. Naturally they are totally depraved. Naturally they are unable to respond, but because of what Christ did on the cross, God gave them sufficient grace to believe, and that sufficient grace which every man possesses becomes efficient in our salvation when we cooperate with it.

Now you can see that may sound as if that is more in harmony with Scripture and may sound to some as if they avoided the error of the Semi-Pelagian. But what is it that enables a man to cooperate with the grace of God? What is it that marks out the one who cooperates from the one who does not? Again, it is something that is located in man. Not something located in God. So ultimately the Arminian plan of salvation leads to the same kind of denial of the grace of God in principle.

The facts are, of course, many men, such as John Wesley, a great Christian man, Mr. Wesley was just inconsistent. He talked about free will but at the same time he talked about grace. We have to accept his belief that he really thought he was believing in grace, but the principle of legalism was there in that that enabled him or others to cooperate with the grace of God. So if there's something in one man that enables him to cooperate which is not in another man, it's clear that salvation depends not only on what Christ did, but something in us.

The Lutherans have avoided Arminianism. Lutherans have been just as opposed to Arminianism as the reformed or Calvinists have been. The Lutherans have said, essentially, God brought me to Jesus Christ and I did not resist. In other words, the Lutheran refuses to admit that the reason that unbelievers are not quickened is due to sovereign withholding of efficacious grace. It is because of resistance to grace. Now we must thank God for the Lutherans denial of some of the truths that have motivated Semi-Pelagians and Arminians. They have said God brought me to Christ, but in this addition, I did not resist, we really in principle come back to the same thing. What is it in us that means that some resist and some do not resist? There's something still in man. And so

even though they have been very strong in their opposition to Arminianism and Semi-Pelagianism, still I don't think they have avoided something of the same problem of the grace of God.

I might say, I don't really think that Martin Luther believed this. This really is something that entered the Lutheran church through Philip Melanchthon. Those of you who have studied Lutheran theology know that Melanchthon is responsible for the introduction of a great deal of semi-Pelagianism within the Lutheran church; not nearly so blatant as other types of semi-Pelagianism. Luther himself was largely at one with John Calvin in these truths; a very strong believer in the doctrine of the grace of God and also, a very strong believer in the fact that sovereign grace is responsible for the salvation of individuals.

Reformed people have affirmed in answer to the question, how and why do we come to Christ. The simple answer, God brought me to Jesus Christ. In other words, our salvation is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit from beginning to end. We were unwilling to come and he in his grace has made the unwilling willing. So while it is true that we do exercise our wills in salvation, we don't deny, incidentally, the fact that we exercise will. What we deny is free will; that is out of one's free will a decision is made. Every decision is made by the will, so the will is active in our salvation. But the will of a Christian believer who responds to the gospel of Jesus Christ is motivated and energized by the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is the Holy Spirit and efficacious grace who moves the man out of unwillingness into willingness and out of a decision of the will he receives the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. The key point is did our salvation begin in a self-movement toward God? Or did it begin in a movement from the Lord God?

Now if it began in a movement from the Lord God and the Holy Spirit moved in our heart to bring us to Christ, then our salvation is a salvation of grace. If however, it moved from man as well as from God, we have a mixture of grace and works. Thus we have violated in principles the gospel of Christ.

Now I'm sure that when you read the Bible the answer to this would be very plain to you, because what does the Bible say about salvation? Salvation is of man and of the Lord. Now you'd be very shocked if you read that in the Bible and you should be shocked, because it's not found in the Bible. The Bible stresses, in more than one place, salvation is of the Lord. In the unfolding of the passages that have to do with salvation, when they end in a doxology, you don't read, now unto him that loved us and unto me who responded. Be glory, majesty, dominion, and power both now and forever. You just don't read that. In other words, in the Bible the work of salvation is traceable to the Lord God only. It is in this way that God is truly glorified in our salvation.

Now I affirm, and I think I'm right in this that a lot of people who are saved really believe in grace but when they talk about it, they talk in confused language; that is, they really believe in grace and if it comes right down to push and shove, whatever we say, they really believe in grace. But when they tried to explain it, they talk like Semi-Pelagians. They talk like Arminians, but you can always tell how they really feel when they talk about prayer. Now when they get down on their knees, they don't pray the Arminian prayer. They don't thank God for his saving work of giving the Lord Jesus Christ to die for us, and they don't thank God that they of their own free will responded to the Lord. And that when they get to heaven, they're going to rejoice in the fact that in their own free will they responded to the Lord God. When they get down on their knees and pray, they thank God for their salvation. That's exactly what they do, because the fundamental disposition that a believer has is to give glory to God. But not having been trained in theology, he frequently talks in confused language.

Now this is something that actually happened and I've mentioned this several times to some of you. I hate to apologize over and over again because I know you're think well he's reached the age where he repeats all the time. [Laughter] So I've said now if I repeat the same illustration in the same message, you'll understand that it is time for one of the elders to come and take my by the shoulder and lead me off in the

congregation over here and have me sit over here, and I hope the time comes when I will sit over in the congregation and listen to somebody else who's mind is clearer. But nevertheless, there was a Presbyterian minister by the name of Reid, and he was working in a meeting. He writes about this in his book.

And he said the evangelist was preaching and when he finished his message, he said this, and I must say it touched me because I frequently in years past use to say something of the same thing. It sounded good to me when I first heard it, so I used to say it. He said this when he finished his gospel preaching; he said, "Now the Lord God has done everything that he can do for your salvation, and I have done everything that I could do for your salvation. I've preached the gospel to you. Now the decision is up to you." Well, now there is nothing wrong with saying the decision is up to you in the sense that you must make a decision. But if you mean that the decision is up to me and there's no pushing from the Lord God, no moving in efficacious grace, then, of course, we have false doctrine. That's what is usually meant by that. God has done everything that he can do. He has given Christ to die for us. I've done everything that I can do. I've preached the good news to you, now it's up to you, and the decision of your free will.

Mr. Reid said he was sitting over near the front; the preacher turned to him and said, "We have a Presbyterian minister over here, Mr. Reid. Mr. Reid, would you stand up and lead in prayer at this point?" He said, "Well I was puzzled." He said, "Here is a preacher who has said God has done everything that he could do and the preacher has done everything that he can do, and the decision rests in the people." And he said, "He asked me to pray to God." He said, "I thought really what I should do is pray to the people that they would make the right decision. That's the first thought that came to my mind. And the second thought was what's the use of praying to a God who has already exhausted his resources? He's done everything that he could do." But he said, "I did exactly what the preacher expected me to do and what I really wanted to do, I prayed

that God would do more than he had already done and that he would bring some of them to trust in Christ."

Well you see that is exactly what we're talking about when we say God brings us to Christ. It is God who in his wonderful grace overcomes our unwillingness and makes us willing. Like Dr. Barnhouse said, "It's God who jiggles our willer so that we may make the right decision." Now he does this in the hearts of all of the elect, bringing them all to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't know who they are, so we preach the gospel universally. We urge men to come because it is important that we urge men through the preaching of the gospel, but the work of salvation is the work of the Lord.

Now in this little incident that we're going to look at for just a few minutes, you can see a great deal of this. The apostle is on his second missionary journey. This journey that he has taken toward the west because it's from the east to Europe, takes only three days. Later it takes five days. It's almost as if the spirit who hindered now helps, and the forces of nature help the purposes of grace. Philippi was a Roman colony. It was a little village, a little town which was a little bit of Rome; that is there were a number of Roman soldiers who had settled in Philippi and they were still allowed to be citizens of the great city of Rome.

Now the Apostle Paul and little company that were traveling with him came into Europe and occupied this particular place as a kind of advance column of the ultimate conqueror undetected. God was making a beachhead in Europe. It's a remarkable little incident in one sense because you may remember that in 42 B.C., the Battle of Philippi was fought and Octavius Caesar met Brutus and Cassius and there the two republican generals. Those Roman republican generals lost and universal empire crouched at the feet of Caesar. So it is an important place. In fact, Philippi has been judged by military men to be one of the ten most significant and critical battles in all of military history.

But let me assure you that the most important thing that really ever happened in Philippi was this little beachhead that the Apostle Paul and some of his companions

made. In fact, on the morning that they arrived in Philippi, if someone had told the great men of Philippi, now two thousand years from there everyone would have forgotten about Philippi, but they'll remember that motley little crowd of people that had just made a landing here. They would have said, well, you are crazy. And if they had gone on the say, furthermore, everybody will have forgotten all of you great men in Philippi and most of them will have forgotten who fought the battle here, Brutus, and Cassius, and Octavius Caesar, most of the people will have forgotten that, but they'll remember two women who meet out there by the river Gangities, in that little prayer enclosure whose names are Euodias and Syntyche. And you know the Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the church at Philippi and he mentions those two ladies; Euodias and Syntyche. But it would have been true because God's advanced column was more important than that great battle that took place there.

And verses 11 and 12, the historian Luke who describes this incident said that they came there. And then in verse 13, he described how on the Sabbath day they went out by the Gangities River. You know this is just about as perfect an anticlimax as one could imagine. The apostle had been over in Troas and there appeared to him in the night the man of Macedonia beseeching him and saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." That is described in the 9th verse of the 16th chapter of the Book of Acts. It was a magnificent vision that the apostle had had. You can imagine how it must have thrilled him to realize that God is still with him in his ministry. And so you can imagine too, almost three days that he made his way over to Philippi and the port city there, he must've thought well, I surely am in for something big since the man of Macedonia has told me "come over and help us." And I say this 13th verse is just as much of an anticlimax as you can find. "And on the sabbath day we went out of the city by the riverside where prayer was a custom to be made and we sat down and spoke unto the women who resorted there." The romance of the heavenly vision to the reality of a dirty little prayer enclosure

from the man of Macedonia, the angelic minister to him, to a few women sitting by the river; something like the synagogues' ladies auxiliary.

Someone has said it reminds him of a young preacher called to a particular place to minister, thrilled with the opportunity now to exercise his gift, and he arrives on Wednesday for the prayer meeting and discovers that all that are there are just a few women and maybe one or two men. So many of our prayer meetings are like that. Now this was then in that sense an up-to-date prayer meeting because the women were primarily there. That's not true of Believers Chapel. I am so glad that men do come out on Wednesday night to hear the word of God.

Now in verses 14 and 15, we have the third of these three great movements that Luke describes here, but here we come to the faith as it is set forth by Luke the historian. In the 14th verse we read, "And a certain woman named Lydia, now Lydia was from Thyatira." Thyatira was a city in the ancient kingdom of Lydia over in Asia Minor. It was famed for the manufacture of purple dye. It was actually in that part of Asia that the apostle had before this been forbidden to preach by the Holy Spirit. But now he comes over into Europe and the first woman who is converted in Europe is a woman from the very place that the Holy Spirit had forbidden him to preach. It's almost as if the Holy Spirit had said; Paul there's no use to go into Asia at the moment. The one I'm interested in, that elect lady is not here right now. She has a business and her business may have been purple dye. She may have been one of those original career women. And she's over in Philippi in Europe. And so it was perhaps an illustration of God's provision for an elect woman and her household. The household that she had suggests that she was a rather wealthy woman. Her house included servants and workers.

But now notice the salvation that is described here in verses 14 and 15, we'll just mention the significant things. We read about Lydia, first of all, that she worshipped God. Now mind you, she is not yet a believer in the true biblical sense, but she's already worshipping God. We believe in such a thing. At least I believe in it. I don't know

about you. Everybody has to have his own personal faith, you know, but I believe in common grace. That is, I believe there is a grace that God shows to all men generally.

Now Lydia was already a worshipper of God. Common grace has to do with general blessing to all creatures. There are many manifestations of that. God gives us food. He gives us drink. He gives us clothing. There are general operations of the Holy Spirit in moral affairs. Why is it that men speak about morals even in the election year? We have a great deal of stress upon restoring morals to our government and things like that. Why do we have that? Well, we have it because God has given certain revelation of truth to all men. It is not saving grace. Theologians call it common grace; its civil order, civil righteousness. Then there are general operations of the Holy Spirit influencing men toward redemption. There are certain things that are operative in the affairs of men which prepare them for the reception of the Lord Jesus Christ. Men have, for example, a high regard often of church, of God, of the Bible, of attending church, things like this, but those manifestations of grace are general common grace. Lydia was a worshipper of God. She's not a believer, but she's a worshipper of God. It's possible to be a worshipper of God in this sense and not a true Christian believer. So the first step in her salvation is common grace.

Now we read in verse 14, "who worshipped God heard us whose heart the Lord opened and she attended unto the things that were spoken by Paul." That's the second stage in a person's salvation; the things spoken by Paul. What were the things spoken by Paul? Well we don't know specifically, but I think it's fair to say we could probably come to a fairly accurate determination of what the things that were spoken by Paul were if we look at Paul's other sermons in the Book of Acts. What did he customarily speak about? Well, in Acts chapter 13, the apostle speaks about Old Testament events. He in a sense takes us down through the books of the Old Testament dealing with God's elective purpose of Israel and the other purposes that he has in the progress of the divine revelation. And then finally he tells us how those things in the Old Testament were

fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ in his person and in his work. In fact, all of the apostles seemed to have preached like that. They took the Old Testament scriptures and they expounded God's dealings with men and how they were fulfilled in the life and ministry of Christ.

So I think that would be a generally acceptable interpretation to say the things spoken by Paul were the word of God, specifically the Old Testament as it is enlightened by New Testament events. That's the second step; the preaching of the word.

Now we also read concerning Lydia, "that she heard us," in verse 14. In other words, the preached word and the convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit that accompanied it were heard by Lydia. Now the Bible talks about general calling and special calling or common grace and efficacious grace. But the general calling is the preaching of the word to all men. We are called even though we may believe that Christ came to die for a definite people. We preach the gospel to all because we don't know the identity of these people whom God has chosen in ages past. So we preach to everyone. There are many reasons why we do that. If you are interested in that, go to the tape ministry. All of that has been handled in the course in soteriology. But the general calling is the preaching of the word of God universally. That is accompanied by the convincing ministry of the Spirit to which some do not respond.

In fact, all do not respond naturally, but when it is preached to the elect at a particular time, the Holy Spirit will bring not only conviction, but conversion though efficacious grace. That's how, incidentally, it is that an elect man may resist for a long time and then at a certain time turn to Christ. He is the object of general calling also, and he manifests his own natural inability in rebellion toward the word of God until the Holy Spirit works in efficacious grace. He's no different from anybody else. When a person is saved, he's saved by the work of God. So the third step is general calling.

Now the most important thing for us here is this fourth step, also referred to in verse 14. "Who worshipped God heard us whose heart the Lord opened." Now just think

for a moment what that text says. If you don't get anything tonight, take a good look at that expression, "whose heart the Lord opened." Now I want you to notice it does not say that she opened her heart. It doesn't say Lydia opened her heart. Now she did, but that's guarded by the previous work of God; "whose heart the Lord opened." It does not say her prayers opened her heart. It does not say, incidentally, Paul, whose heart Paul opened. Paul did not open her heart. It says, "Whose heart the Lord opened." In other words, it was an operation of God himself that brought Lydia to really hear in understanding the things that she was listening to with her ears. "Whose heart the Lord opened." We're told, incidentally, in the first of the Book of Acts, that the Book of Acts is the continuation of the ministry of the risen Christ. The gospel tells us what Jesus began to both do and teach. Acts tells us what he continued to do and teach, and here, he continues to do and teach through the Holy Spirit, and Lydia, one of the elect, is there listening to the Apostle Paul preach and it was not because he was a eloquent man, it was the Lord who opened her heart; not the power of the truth, not the power of the Trinity, just so as a Trinity, but it was the Lord specifically who opened her heart and enabled her to understand.

The natural force of the Bible is insufficient to save people. If it were, then people would be saved uniformly, but we know that is not true. If we are the results simply of a wide preaching of the gospel, we would see uniformity in life. We would find that people when their hearts are most tender to the gospel, toward the gospel, would respond. But we don't find that. We find often this, we find a young child whose heart is tender and open toward the gospel, does not respond. We find also, the Bible teaches this, that they listened to the Bible over and over again. They listened to preaching like Believers Chapel, and when they don't respond as the weeks, and months, and years go by, a hardening operation takes place. When we do not respond to the Scriptures, we become harder and harder; more difficult to reach. That's what the

Scriptures teach over and over again. There is a place when only divine retribution may take place, as the generation on the earth when the Lord Jesus Christ was here.

What do we find in experience though? We find here's a little child, sits on the second row, listens to a gospel preached year after year. He reaches grammar school, he still hasn't responded. He reaches high school, he's not responded; his hearts a little harder now because he's heard it so much. He becomes a man, a young man, he still doesn't respond. His heart now is harder. It's more difficult for him to understand spiritual things and respond to them. He goes on into middle age. He still hasn't responded. He is very hard, very difficult. Suddenly, suddenly the same old truth that had been preached for days, and weeks, and months, and years, suddenly that truth becomes operative and this man who is hardened, far more hardened to the truth than he was when he was a little child, suddenly responds in faith. How do you explain that? Natural power of the truth? No. The power of the Holy Spirit who uses the truth at a particular time and makes the unwilling hard hearted man responsive to the gospel. That's the only way you can explain that.

So here, "whose heart the Lord opened." Now then, this was a remarkable thing because it involved the removal of all of her prejudices. She, evidentially, was a proselyte to the Hebrew faith because she met with those Jewish people out there. No doubt she had heard of the Apostle Paul. She was a woman, who evidently, had contact with Asia Minor, wide acquaintance among professing believers in Jehovah. She had heard of him. She no doubt was exposed to all the religious prejudices that were rampant in that day. Who can expect to find any truth from those Nazarenes, those hated Nazarenes? We hear that one of our chief rabbis by the name of Saul has gone over to them. You surely cannot believe a man like that.

It's like today, you know, they come into Believers Chapel: what denomination is this? Well, there's no denomination. Well, how can I possibly be blessed in a church which is not a member of a denomination? Well, what kind of theology do you, or no,

who is your pastor? Well, really we don't have any pastor; we just have a board of elders who rule this church. We have some preachers here, but we don't have any pastor. How can I be blessed in a church that doesn't have a pastor? Or they will say, what's your program here? Well, we really don't have any programs. You mean you are not involved in Evangelistic Explosion or any of the other kinds of programs? You are not connected with some type of movement among people. No we are really not. How can I possibly be blessed in a church like this? Well, what do you preach here? Well, we just preach the Bible. We begin at a book and go right through a book. My goodness! How dull that must be. It's impossible for me to get excited over something like that. I know I'd fall asleep after the first message or so. Incidentally, how long does your preacher preach? Well, he preaches about forty-five or fifty minutes. Forty-five or fifty minutes? Well, it's nice to have known you. [Laughter] By the way, what kind of doctrine does he preach? Well, he's a Calvinist. Oh, that the end of it. A Calvinist! [Laughter]

Well, she had all of those prejudices you see, but all of these prejudices are of no account whatsoever when the Holy Spirit takes the word of God and applies the word of God to the heart. Then there comes a spiritual awakening. We see our lost condition. We see what Christ has done, and we see that we cannot save ourselves. But God the Holy Spirit so moves in us that we want to be saved, and we want to flee to Christ, and we want to lay hold of the forgiveness of sins. We want to stand justified before the Lord and nothing will prevent us in our heart from saying, O God, I'm a sinner just like you say, and I want to be saved. I see that Christ has died for sinners. I must have this salvation. Lord, I receive the salvation by grace through faith as you've said in the Bible, and you're born again; a transformation takes place. Hardened as you might have been the Holy Spirit has plowed and softened that heart so that it is receptive to the gospel. That's what we mean when we talk about efficacious grace. That's the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing a man to faith in Christ.

Well we read here that in this 14th verse again, "that she attended unto the things that were spoken by Paul." That's the product of the opening of the heart. She attended whose heart the Lord opened, so that she believed. Now people often ask, what's first regeneration or faith? Why you should be able to see from this, "whose heart the Lord opened that she attended." We're not born again because we believe, we believe because the Holy Spirit has already wrought in our heart and given us new life and the first expression of it is to believe. That's the divine order. Listen to what the Bible says, "Every man who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." 1 John 5:1. Plain as day; "has been," is perfect tense. "Everyone who believes," present.

Everyone who is a believer has been born. That was true yesterday, the day before, it was true the very moment you believe; the very moment that you believe you had then born of God. You know that from other things too. Does faith please God? Does it? Of course, faith pleases God. The Bible says, however, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." So if a man is in the flesh, if he is lost, he cannot believe. If he could believe, he could please God in the flesh. What happens? God takes him out of the flesh, puts him in the Spirit, as Paul says in Romans 8, then he believes. That's his first act as he hears the word of God. He's taken by the Holy Spirit out of the flesh, put in the Spirit, given new life, and the expression of it is to believe. She believed. Faith, knowledge, assent, trust. *notitia, assensus, fiducia*. Knowledge, assent, trust. I wish I had time to explain that, but I don't have time.

Now what do you do when you have been the receiver of the efficacious grace of God, you have been born again, so that you attend to the word, you therefore have faith, what do you do then? Sign a decision card? Raise your hand in a meeting? Come down front? Pray through? No. You do what Lydia did. She had good advice. She got it from the apostles. Verse 15 says, "and when she was baptized;" that's the biblical way to express your faith. Don't listen to evangelists. Listen to the Bible. What's the Bible say? Attend an evangelistic meeting? Meet with the man who will seek to lead you to the Lord?

Sign the decision card? All of that is nonsense. When the Holy Spirit works in a man's heart and he has been born again through the preaching of the word, what he should do is seek out the elders and say, I've been born again. I believed in Christ. I've been saved. I have the forgiveness of sins. I want to express my faith in water baptism. And so Lydia was baptized, that's the way you express your faith. Baptized in water. If you believe you should express your faith in baptism. You notice her baptism followed her attending to the words of Paul too.

And then what do you do? Well, your life of good works which God has before ordained that you should walk in them naturally follows. So we read, "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." So what do you do after you've been saved? You entertain the preacher. [Laughter] No. You do good works. Good works. It just so happened in this instance it was apostles. I know what you are saying; I would entertain the apostles but just any ordinary preacher that's different. I'm all for that too. Her good works did not end in the water. Love to God's people is the distinguishing mark of God's elect. How do we know that we've been born again, John says, because we love the brethren. That's how. Those who love the brethren seek to serve and minister to the brethren. That's the evidence of the new birth.

Well our time is up. We'll have to stop. Let's close in a word of prayer. If you're here tonight and you've never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we invite you to consider the cross of Jesus Christ where sins of sinners were paid for fully. And we urge you through the Holy Spirit to make the decision initiated by God to receive him as personal Savior.

[Prayer] Oh, God, we praise Thee for the grace manifested to us which so efficaciously has wrought and saved us. How wonderful it is. We could never praise Thee sufficiently. It will take the ages of eternity to give Thee complete thanks for all that

Thou hast done. The gratitude for our salvation overflows, Lord. Enable us to serve Thee in a way that would bring Thee pleasure and blessing to the saints of God. For Jesus' sake. Amen.