



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 16:1-15

“The Conversion of a Businesswoman”

TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins] Now the Scripture reading for today is found in the 16th chapter of the Book of the Acts. Chapter 16 of the Book of Acts. Now you will, of course, probably remember the context of Acts chapter 16. The Apostle Paul has concluded his first missionary journey. And then in beginning a second missionary journey, after a few words of conversation with Barnabas in which he expressed his desire to go out and see how those who had been brought to the Lord were now doing, he and Barnabas decided to go. And Barnabas and he had a little discussion. The result was that Paul chose Silas and "recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God, he went out through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." And then we pick up the story with verse 1 of chapter 16,

"Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep,

that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily."

That of course, is a very significant verse. It is not surprising that churches established in the faith should increase in number daily. And this of course is the divine order. We are not interested in numbers. We are interested in establishment in the faith. And then we believe that numbers shall probably result from that.

"Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. (Now if you have been careful listener, you will have noticed that the author of this book has moved from the third person to the first person in this verse. And from this we presume that at Troas in Asia Minor the Apostle Paul and Silas and Timothy were joined by Luke the physician who wrote this book. And he writes out of personal experience.)

Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; (Samothracia was an island in the Aegean Sea and Neapolis is the port of Philippi) And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony (that is, a Roman colony, a little bit of Rome away from Rome): and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord

opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of 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."

May God bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we turn again to Thee through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit confident that Thou dost hear our voice because of the merits of the finished work of the Son of God. We thank Thee, Lord, that we do not come in the name of a church or even of the church of Jesus Christ, that we do not come in another man's name, but we come in the name of one who in himself has made it possible for a way into the presence of God to be opened. And we thank Thee that the Holy Spirit has come to us and has enlightened us, for our eyes, the eyes of our heart, were darkened, and we could not see. And we thank Thee that he has not only come to our heart and has enlightened us, but he has come to our will, which was rebellious, and in measure brought it into subjection to him who gave himself for us.

And so, Lord, we thank Thee that today we may address Thee in the assurance that we are heard. And, Lord, we wish to acknowledge our sins and our shortcomings and the many failures that are represented in the lives of us who claim that we know Jesus Christ. And we pray, oh God, that Thou wilt minister to us in a way that others may see us at least as faithful witnesses to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. And we pray, Lord, that others may not look upon us but look upon him and enable us to point others to him. We thank Thee for those who are here today who may be troubled and distressed and disturbed and who may have problems and perplexities that seem insurmountable burdens. We thank Thee that through Jesus Christ Thou art able to meet all of our needs. And so Lord, we pray that Thou wilt minister to each one of us as the need exists. For those who need enlightenment regarding the next step, oh Father, give them guidance

and direction. And we pray for this assembly of Christian people, and oh Father, we pray that the Holy Spirit may work in our midst to the end that not only in Dallas, but to the uttermost parts of the earth, the testimony of Jesus Christ may be felt. Guide and direct the elders. Minister to them and the deacons, and others of our friends and fellow believers who meet in Jesus' name here. And oh God, we pray for the friends who are here. And we pray that the ministry of the word may build them up in the faith.

Lord, we pray for our country, for President Nixon, for congress, for his cabinet and for others in the administration. Guide and direct them. We pray that wisdom may be given to them. We pray for our men in the armed services of the United States of America. And oh God, we pray that in the midst of the dangerous days in which they live, they may have an opportunity, if it please Thee, to hear the glorious good news of our Lord Jesus Christ. We commit to Thee every faithful minister of the word of God in every church of Jesus Christ, and wilt Thou minister through them to the building up of the church of Jesus Christ, both in strength, in faith and in numbers. We commit ourselves to Thee in this service today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] I have a long title today. The subject for our study today is "The Conversion of a Businesswoman" or "From Indistinguishable Grace Through Invincible Grace to Inevitable Good Works."

The Europe of today, its culture, its institutions, its spiritual foundations stem from the incident that we have just read in the 16th chapter of the Book of Acts. An opened heart led to an opened house, which ultimately led to an opened continent. Aside from some important theological lessons, which we're going to spend our time upon, they're several other significant ones to be learned in this passage. Now, one of these is the apparent insignificance yet the real greatness of things that are done for God.

If you had been Philippi in the fifties of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, and you had been there when the Apostle Paul and Silas and Timothy and Luke came into that little city and

began to stay a few days, if you had discussed with the mighty men of Philippi what is the most significant thing that is happening in Philippi or that has happened in Philippi, those men would probably have said, This city will go down in history as the site of one of the greatest of battles ever fought. If you remember your ancient history, you will remember that it was near Philippi in 42 B.C. that Octavianus, a Roman emperor to be, together with Mark Antony, the republican general, met and defeated Brutus and Cassius in a battle that in a sense determined the future course of the Roman empire. Philippi became a Roman colony. Roman soldiers, when they retired, came to this city. They were given special privileges. It was a little bit of Rome away from Rome. And every citizen of the city of Philippi would surely have said we shall be known because of what happened here.

But the truth of the matter is that Philippi is today known as the place to which Paul addressed a letter. Euodias and Syntyche, two ladies in the church at Philippi, are probably better known to many of our Americans than the soldiers who fought near Philippi. And probably most of us, even those of us who took ancient history in college, if it's been just a few years gone, may have forgotten the significance of the battle that was fought at Philippi. And yet, men remember Paul. Men remember that little band including that weather beaten Jew who traversed its cities one day, the apparent insignificance and yet the true greatest of things that are done for God.

In fact, it well may be that the greatest thing that happens in Dallas over the past two days is not the fact that the Cowboys defeated the Jets, though that is great. We're now world's champions; we won it last night. The greatest thing may be that the word of God is proclaimed in Believers Chapel or in some other church in the city of Dallas.

Then there is another thing which is related to it, and I think you could probably sense it, and it is the law of small silent beginning of constructive things. The greatest illustration of this is the life of Jesus Christ. Born in a manger in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, a little nook or cranny of the ancient world, became a carpenter and labored at

a carpenter's bench, went up and down the streets in the midst of the villages and cities of a little land which was of no real significance in Augustus' day. And yet when Jesus Christ was hanging upon a cross outside the city of Jerusalem, the greatest event in human history was really happening. And so we learn the law of small silent beginning of constructive things. "He shall not lift up his voice, nor cry, nor cause it to be heard in the streets," the prophets said would be true of him, and it was. But it was God's voice and it was important.

Now let's drop those for a moment, and let's go to our study and our story. The Apostle Paul and Barnabas had gone out on a missionary journey, and they had been used of God to establish some churches. And then as good evangelists, they had discussed the matter, and Paul had said, Barnabas, I think it would be good for us to go back and see how our brethren are doing in the cities where we have planted the word of God. Barnabas said, Paul, that's a capital idea. Let's take Mark with us. And Paul said, Uh uh, Mark shall not go. Barnabas said, I think he ought to go Paul. He's a young man. He needs encouragement. Paul said, Barnabas, do you remember that when we were in Pamphylia, and Mark was with us; he did not go with us but turned back and went home skulking to his mother in Jerusalem. And Barnabas replied, But Paul, we shouldn't judge a man on the basis of one incident like that. And Paul said, (I think I'm understanding Paul, being a follower of Paul) Barnabas, he shall not go. And Barnabas (He was a man full of the Holy Ghost, a son of consolation), Paul, please, let's take Mark. It'll mean a lot to him. And furthermore, he's my nephew. And Paul said, He shall not go. And he did not go. Why the dissension became, "The contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other."

G. K. Chesterton once said, "The worse thing about a quarrel is that it stops an argument." Now, arguments are good. I think if our churches had more arguments that were not stopped by quarrels, we would be better off because there are things that we learn in discussion that we can never learn anywhere else. But whoever took the texts

out of their contexts and applied them to every word of discussion in the church, "Remember, we should not judge one another." "And remember we must love the brethren." Whoever took those texts out of their contexts and applied them to every discussion which became a little heated before it reached a quarrel is guilty of one of the greatest crimes against the church of Jesus Christ. We ought to at least learn enough to learn that we can discuss the things of the word of God and learn from one another without getting mad at one another. And the church would be better off if we could smile when someone pointed out something in the word of God which caused us to say, You know I think I did misunderstand that text. Now I see it because my brother has pointed out something that I had overlooked.

Well, at any rate, the result of this was that Paul chose Silas, and Barnabas took Mark and sailed off to Cyprus. I don't know who was right and who was wrong. I do know this. We never hear of Barnabas again in the Book of Acts. I also know that the church recommended Paul and Silas unto the grace of God, and it may have been an indication that they felt that right was on the side of Paul. It's rather insignificant, in a way. Mark was ultimately restored after his loss of fellowship. And Paul recommended Mark in one of his last epistles. But Paul chose Silas, and they went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches that they had founded. And evidently they said, You know it would be nice if we went on and planted some churches elsewhere.

There comes a time, you know, when it's a good thing for a group of Christians to think about somebody else, and planting the word of God somewhere else. And I think it might be good for Believers Chapel that we think about planting the word of God somewhere else.

And so when they reached the center of Asia Minor, Paul said to Silas, Come on, let's go into Asia, the province of Asia in Asia Minor. And Luke tells us they "were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." What happened? I do not know. Perhaps they arrived at the border and Paul's visa was not in shape, and he

couldn't enter. Or it may be that the border guards just didn't like the looks of that little Jew with his friend. At any rate, they could not go. It is possible that his health made it impossible for him to go there.

At any rate, he decided to go north. And so when he reached Mysia, he said I think I'll go north and east into Bithynia. And the Spirit said, No again, Paul, "the Spirit suffered them not." And so Paul cannot go west; he cannot go northeast, and it is as if he is forced and constrained to the west, north of Asia down through Mysia to the city of Troas. And there on the Aegean Sea, Paul and Silas and Luke and Timothy found themselves.

Perhaps this is where Luke met Paul. We know that the apostle was troubled with eye disease and Luke was a doctor. It's just possible that they arrived there and Paul turned to Silas and he said, You know, my eyes are bothering me so much, I think I'm going to have to see a physician. Does anybody know of a physician? And one of his friends spoke up, and he said, I know a man. His name is Luke, Doctor Luke. He lives on Twenty-four Ephesus Street, right on the corner. And so there he went, knocked on the door, and Luke came. And Luke somehow or other came to know Jesus Christ. We do not know the situation. Do not take that for the word of God. At any rate, Luke identified himself with Paul and went with him on his journey.

Well, while Paul was there and thinking about what he was going to do, Luke tells us he had a vision. One night, there appeared a man from Macedonia. And this man urged and exhorted Paul and said, Paul, "come over into Macedonia, and help us." And when Paul awoke from his vision, he recounted in his mind the things that had happened. He thought: We went out to strengthen the churches. We decided that we wanted to go into Asia and the Spirit said, No. Then we went north and tried to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit suffered us not. And we were, as it were, forced down to Troas, almost against our will. Every door seems to have been closed. And now we're here, and I've received this vision.



You know the text, the word that is translated "assuredly gathering" is a Greek word that means "to cause to unite, to cause to go together and thus to unite." It really means to put two and two together. Paul took all of these events that had happened, these facts, and he put them all together. And he said, You know, Silas, the message is plain; God wants us to go over into Europe. And so he obeyed the voice, the heavenly vision that had come to him. And he and Silas and Luke and Timothy and perhaps some others decided Europe for them.

Now there are three movements in the story that I want to discuss with you for a few moments which begins with the 11th verse. And the first one is very simple. It is from Troas to Philippi. This journey takes only three days for Paul and his company. Later on in the Book of Acts, it take five. From this I presume that the Spirit, who has been hindering Paul in his ministry, now is helping Paul. And it's almost as if the forces of nature helped the purposes of grace. And the Spirit who has said No, no, now says Yes, yes. And when the sails are raised upon the boat, they are full of a strong wind that carries them to Samothracia on the first day, then to Neapolis and into Philippi in three days, breaking the trans-Aegean time record for sailing from Troas to Neapolis.

There they come to a colony in Philippi. A colony, a little bit of Rome. The advance columns of the ultimate conquerer of the continent of Europe have now occupied a beachhead of the enemy, and they are completely undetected. One of the sources of success in military warfare is surprise. And if ever Europe was surprised, it was on the day that that little company of Jewish men came into the city of Philippi to capture not only Europe but the western world for the influence of Jesus Christ.

Now the second movement is another very simple one. It is stated for us in the 13th verse. It is from Philippi to the Gangetis river. Now I know that it does not say here that this river is the Gangetis river. And I, some years ago, was preaching on this topic, and someone came up to me afterwards and said, Lewis, I don't see how in the world you get the Gangetis river out of Acts chapter 16. Now, it is not stated, but Philippi was

known for that river. And most likely, that is the river. So, here we read, "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither."

I think this 13th verse is about a perfect anticlimax as you could possibly imagine: From the romance of a heavenly vision in Troas in Asia Minor to the reality of a dirty little prayer enclosure by the side of a river outside the city of Philippi. Now, if that's not enough of an anticlimax: From the man of Macedonia, who has appeared to him in magnificent vision, to a few women who are sitting by a river who are the ladies' auxiliary of a synagogue that does not even exist yet. The man of Macedonia, Silas, what a magnificent vision I received, a man from Macedonia saying, Come over and help us. And it turns out to be a few women sitting by the side of a river.

That's not all. This was an up to date prayer meeting, by the way. Only the women were present apparently. We do not know who the women were. We know that in Philippians in the 4th chapter, Paul writes about some women. He speaks there in the 2nd verse of the 4th chapter, "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." So perhaps not only was Lydia there, but Euodias and Syntyche, those two that Dr. Ironside used to say, "An uneducated country preacher in the south used to call Odious and Soon Touchie."

Paul continues in the 3rd verse of chapter 4 by saying, "And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow." And some, whose imaginations are even greater than mine, have interpreted "true yokefellow" as a reference to Lydia who later became the wife of the Apostle Paul, so they say. It is most likely that that is Luke, true yokefellow. At any rate, Paul now is by the side of the river. The man of Macedonia has faded into a few women sitting by the side of the river praying. And mind you, this is the Pharisee who prayed, Oh God, (the Pharisee's prayer), Oh God, I thank Thee that I am not a Gentile, and that I'm not a slave, and that I'm not a woman. Isn't that a lovely prayer? That was their prayer. And here he is by the side of a river and a few women.

Now we come to the third movement and the final one. And I'm calling this "From Religion to Salvation." Let me say a few words about Lydia first of all. Lydia lived in Thyatira. Thyatira was in the place where the ancient kingdom of Lydia had been. And so perhaps she was named for her country, like someone here might be named United States. So her name is Lydia, but she lived in Thyatira.

Now Thyatira was noted for its manufacture of dye. Some of the most expensive dye that was made in the ancient world was made right in Thyatira. Some of it cost as much as, well we cannot hardly give the equivalent today, but over a hundred dollars a pound. Expensive dye, extremely expensive. Perhaps in our inflated economy, many hundreds of dollars a pound. So Lydia was a dealer in dye.

Now she lived in Asia. Now, isn't that striking? Where had Paul wished to go? Why he had wished to go to Asia, but the Spirit had forbidden him. Now, he finds himself in Philippi in Europe, and there present is a woman from Asia from Thyatira.

Not only that, she apparently was a rather wealthy woman because she had a household, which I presumed, since her husband is not named, represented not only her children perhaps, but also her helpers. And since she was a dealer in dye and a long way from home, and she apparently had some money and entourage, I would rather suggest that she was probably a very wealthy woman who had a factory back in Thyatira but was now out on a selling mission seeking to expand her products. And so this was Lydia incorporated. Much better even than Avon products. And a successful businesswoman, too.

The idea of a woman being a successful businesswoman, you see, is not a modern idea. Not necessarily recommending this, ladies. If you do go into business, by all means, be successful, of course. But here she is, then, a wealthy, apparently well-educated, successful businesswoman away from home and an Asian. And there she is.

And she is there by the providence of God. You see, when Paul came to Asia and said I think I'm going into Asia, the Spirit said, No, Paul. I want you to reach Asia alright,

but the way to reach Asia is my way. And we reach Asia by reaching an Asian who happens to now be in the city of Philippi. And as a matter of fact, Paul, she happens to be one of Jesus Christ's sheep. And Jesus said, "Them also I must bring." And so this sheep of our Lord's, who had not yet come to the fold, is there in Philippi. And the agent of God, the Apostle Paul, is under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and finally, I say almost against his own will, he discovers himself in the presence of this woman, and God has a great work to do.

Now, I want to say a word to you this morning. If you are here in this audience, it is not by accident. Nothing ever happens in the lives of men by accident. There is a divine purpose in your being here. And it is your duty to discover the reason why you are here today when the word of God is being proclaimed. But we must hasten on.

Now, seven things are set forth in the doctrine of salvation that is recorded here. I read in the 14th verse that this woman worshipped God. Now, theologians speak about common grace. And when we talk about theology, people are inclined to not be very interested.

Last month in the Dallas Morning News, while I was not here, there was a little cartoon written by Mr. Schulz, Peanuts. And Linus, who is the theologian of the strip, remember, came to Lucy, and she was jumping on her jumping rope. And she was very intent. And he walked up and he said, Here's something I'll bet you don't know. And she continues to jump, turns away from him a little bit, utterly indifferent to him. The Bible contains three million, five hundred and sixty-six thousand, four hundred and eighty letters and seven hundred and seventy-three thousand, eight hundred and ninety-three words. And the third panel, Lucy continues to jump her jump rope without any interest at all. And Linus finally says, You're just not interested in theology, are you?

Now, let me assure you, I'm not going to tell you how many words and letters the Bible contains. That really, I would think, is not too important. But what I am going to say is really important. Lydia worshipped God. She was the recipient of a common

grace. If she was a Jew, she had come to believe in the one God. If she was a proselyte to the Hebrew faith, she had come from belief in many gods to one God. At least, she had come to believe in one God, but that does not make a person a Christian.

A Christian believes in one God, but so do Muhammadans, so do Hindus, so do Unitarians, and they are not Christians. A Christian believes in more than the unity of God. He believes that this one God subsists in three persons, of whom two, aside from the Father, are the Son of God and the Holy Spirit. And even that is not saving knowledge. But she is the recipient of common grace: a grace that God gives to men in general, a sense of the fear of God, a sense of coming judgment, a sense of uneasiness in the presence of the everlasting God, common grace. You see, God had been working in the heart of Lydia long before she ever met Paul.

Number two, we next read that she "heard us." The word of God going forth generally, "general calling", it is called by theologians. It is when I preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a group like this of whom there are some who are Christians and some who are not Christians. And the word of God goes forth generally, so that each one of you is responsible to God. The word of God has gone forth that Jesus Christ is the savior of the world and has died for our sins upon the cross at Calvary. You are now responsible, responsible to God. You have been generally called. But unfortunately, our wills are in sin, our eyes are blinded, our ears are deaf. We need more than a general work of God in calling.

And so we read thirdly in verse 14, "whose heart the Lord opened." It does not say she opened her heart. She did not open her heart. She could not open her heart. It does not say her prayers opened her heart. Her prayers, in themselves, could not open her heart. It does not even say Paul opened her heart. Even the apostle could not open her heart. The only one who could open her heart is the Lord, and the Lord opened her heart.

Now, I wish I had time to say a few things about the details here. Let me say this: I think the very fact that this text says that her heart was opened indicates that the work of the Holy Spirit was the removal of prejudices that prevented her from seeing the truth that was in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. After all, she was a Jew, whether originally or whether a proselyte to the faith. And she knew what had happened in Palestine. She was educated, intelligent. She traveled about the ancient world. And all heard about these men who were traveling over the world turning it upside-down. She knew about what had happened in Palestine when Jesus, the Son of God, was crucified upon the cross at Calvary. The word had gone out all over that world: That man was a blasphemer. That man was disobedient to God. That man even claimed that he was the Son of God. That man was a devil. And she had heard it.

And now this little weather-beaten Jew in her presence, with his little company, was preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And the prejudices were strong. She had even heard that her people had said, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." And she was determined to follow the leadership of Caiphas and the others.

You know, today the prejudices against Jesus Christ are so manifold that it is difficult often to understand how people can possibly come to faith in Christ if we do not believe in a God who calls men special by the power of the Holy Spirit. How can I possibly be blessed in a church which has no membership? How can I possibly be blessed in a church which has no pastor? How can I possibly be blessed by a church that has no doctrinal statement than that has the effrontery to say that our doctrinal statement is the New Testament? What kind of a strange conglomeration of people exist and meet in such a fellowship?

How is it possible for me to be blessed by a person who preaches those old fashioned Calvinistic doctrines about the total depravity of man, about unconditional election, and all the rest? Has he not forgotten that we've moved out of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century? Do we have to go all the way back to men like that? No,

we go farther back. We go all the way back to Paul. And we preach the gospel as the New Testament has set it forth in our attempt. Oh, the prejudices that exist toward the truth of Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, I wish I had time to say a few words about Pelagianism and Arminianism and Calvinism at this point, for here it is, "whose heart the Lord opened." It does not say that Lydia had strength in herself to open her heart as a Pelagian would. It does not say, as an Arminian might say, that God gave her prevenient grace so that she cooperating with it in her will said yes to God, and by the decision of her will, she received everlasting life, for her will was under the judgment of God also.

Our will is the expression of what we are. We will to go to see the Cowboys play the Jets because we love football, that's why. We need a work of God. It's like a doctor, you know, who might stand by the bedside of someone who doesn't want to take his medicine and say, and he might say, You know, I'm going to help him to take his medicine if he will. But if he wills to take the medicine, he doesn't need the doctor's help. And consequently, if we willed to receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we wouldn't need any prevenient grace.

The truth of the matter is we don't will it. And therefore, God must work upon our will. And he works upon our wills, so that we respond. Our wills become subject to the will of God by the grace of God "whose heart the Lord opened," special calling. That special calling that God gives toward his elect. Ah, you don't like that word elect. It's a biblical word. It's a biblical word. If you have some question about whether you're among the elect or not, you can settle it right now. Don't go out of this auditorium and say, I don't like this idea of some people being elect and some not. You can settle it right now. You know what you have to do? Thank you, Lord, for giving Jesus Christ to die for me. I take him as my personal savior. I want to be one of the elect.

Now, if you're not willing to turn to him, then you have no reason to go out and say, I don't like the doctrine of election. You don't like me, do you? I don't think you would have liked Paul.

Now, we read fourthly, "she attended unto the things that were spoken," the word of God. No one comes to Jesus Christ except through the instrumentality of the word of God. It is through the word of God that the Spirit of God opens the hearts of men.

What did Paul say? I do not know. I can only know from Paul's other preaching what he might have said. He did not give us a rundown on current politics in the first century. He did not talk about Agrippa. He did not talk about Herod and Pilate and others in the past. He did not talk about the bad moral conditions in the first century. He did not talk about slavery and rioting and other things. He talked about the word of God first and foremost.

As a matter of fact, probably what he did, if we can judge from his other statements, he went to the Old Testament and he opened up the Scriptures. And from those Scriptures, he identified those facts with the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, and said, This is the Messiah of which they speak. He spoke about the prophet, and he said, There is a prophet, Moses said there was a prophet coming like him who would be greater than he and that men should listen to him. And Paul said, That prophet has come, and he is Jesus of Nazareth. Paul said, David and the prophets spoke about the servant of Jehovah who should come and who should die, suffer and die, and should be resurrected, and he should call men to him and ultimately should establish the kingdom of God upon the earth, and this Jesus of Nazareth is he. And then he spoke about those specific passages of the Old Testament that said he would suffer as a priest, offering the one offering that would forever take away sin, and Jesus of Nazareth is he.

And this woman who said I will not pay attention to a man who preaches Jesus of Nazareth discovered herself by the power of God responding in trust and faith, and finally, against her will, she bowed in obedience to the preaching of the word of God and



said, I love this man who apparently meets my need by the death that he died for me upon Calvary's cross, and I take Jesus Christ as my personal savior. "She attended to the things that were spoken," the word, and she attended.

Fifth, faith. She did not just hear. She did not just go out and say, You know, that was a lovely talk. What in the world did he say? He certainly delivered it with earnestness and devotion, but I didn't get a single thing that he said. She attended to the things that she heard. She believed them. I will identify myself with this company.

And then sixthly, what did she do then? Why she came down front in the church meeting. That's what you do. Or Paul called for all those who would like to have the apostles pray for them to raise their hands, and she raised her hand. Or Paul asked for them to sign a decision card: rededication, restoration, first-time decision, and she checked first-time decision and passed it forward in the meeting. No, the truth of the matter is, do you know what she did? "She was baptized." That's right. She was baptized.

You see, the New Testament way to express your faith in Jesus Christ is to be baptized. We do not make too much of baptism. We remember that baptism does not save anyone. The man who goes down into the waters of baptism without Jesus Christ comes up wet, and that's all. [Laughter] But we do not make too little of it. We do not say, Because so many have misused baptism, misinterpreted it, that we will therefore have nothing to do with it for Jesus commanded it. And the apostles practiced it. And if we think that we are so spiritual as not to obey the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are surely wrong. They were baptized.

But, seventh, her life did not end in water. 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." Good works. "Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

I know it's difficult to love some of the brethren. Some of my friends say they like 'em, but they don't love them. But if you have genuinely been born again by Jesus Christ, there is a oneness that is deeper than blood, and which if you yield to the power of the Holy Spirit within, which will supernaturally enable you to love the unlovely. And she loved, and she said, Paul, come and stay in my house. "And she constrained us." It was the word that the disciples on the Emmaus road used of Jesus when they wished him to spend the evening with them. Come stay with me, Paul. So anxious to hear the truths of the word of God from this great man of God.

And so Lydia becomes the first convert in Europe and the pattern for all that followed. And she was a genuine one, too. Paul writes to the Philippian church a few years later, and he speaks about those who have known Jesus Christ from the first day until now. So then, what a wonderful picture of salvation: common grace through general calling, special calling through the preaching of the word of God and faith to it, through baptism to good works, or from indistinguishable grace through invincible grace which opened her heart to the inevitable good works that followed.

Our time is up. I had intended to say a little bit more about the simplicity of the forces of God. Paul had nothing but a word. As David said to the high priests at Nob when told that Goliath's sword was hid behind the ephod, Give me that, there is none like it. And there is nothing like the Gospel of Jesus Christ to transform the hearts of men when the Holy Spirit opens their hearts.

And may I say to you this? A man may be very near to God yet very far. Lydia was religious, but lost. Lydia was zealous. She attended meetings, but she was lost. Lydia was a prayer warrior. She attended prayer meetings, but she was lost. Lydia was cultured, but she was lost. Lydia was wealthy, but she was lost. Lydia was probably very intelligent, but she was lost. You see, a man may be religious, earnest, zealous, a prayer warrior, attending the meetings of the church, wealthy, influential, but if he does not know Jesus Christ, he is lost, lost, no hope. He does not know the secret of life. There is

no meaning in life. There is no sense in life, until we sense the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so amid the great men, the great events, the great philosophies of Lydia's day, she learned the truth of the stanza that we sometimes sing, "All that I was, my sin, my guilt, My death, was all my own; And that I am, I owe to Thee, My gracious God, alone."

Salvation is of the Lord. Do you have it? Has your heart been opened? Have you attended to the word spoken through the word of God, and have you come to faith in Jesus Christ? We exhort you and we urge you in the power of the Holy Spirit who opens hearts to come to him and say thank you, Lord, for Jesus Christ. I take him as my personal savior over my prejudices, over my objections. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God, for the invincible grace of the Holy Spirit so irresistible in the hearts of the sheep and for Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself for us. Oh God, help us under the Holy Spirit to interpret the great events of the Gospel of Christ in a personal way to us. And now, may grace, mercy and peace abide upon all who know him in sincerity until he comes again. We ask in his name. Amen.