

Salvation: What Does the Bible Teach? – Part 1

Acts 16:12-15

Introduction:

1. Have you ever tried to serve the Lord and you felt like you were running into a brick wall? Paul must have felt this way. vs. 6-7
2. Finally, God made it clear to Paul and his missionary team that they needed to head into Macedonia (modern-day Europe). They immediately obeyed. vs. 10-11
 - One side note: it appears that the writer of Acts, Luke, joins Paul's team. Notice the change of personal pronouns to "we" in verse 10.
3. They settled in the city of Philippi. It was a chief (important) city in that part of Macedonia, named after the Emperor Philip, the father of Alexander the Great.
4. After several days and no apparent progress, they heard that there was a little worship service that met by the riverside each Sabbath day.
5. Paul and his group decided to attend the service. While there, they began witnessing to several women about Jesus Christ. vs. 13
6. A businesswoman by the name of Lydia listened and received Paul's message. She became a disciple of Christ and even opened up her home to allow Paul's missionary team to set up their headquarters there. vs. 14-15
7. This is the humble beginnings of a great church that was to be formed, to whom Paul would later write the book of Philippians.
8. This morning we will examine Lydia's conversion and learn several vital principles about salvation. Do you know you are saved today? Do you know your sins are fully forgiven? Do you know that heaven is your home? You can know!

First, salvation is needed by everyone.

1. It appears that Lydia was a Gentile who was seeking the truth of God. She had come to fear the God of Israel and may have been a proselyte into the religion of Judaism.
2. So we have a woman that attended prayer meetings each Sabbath day and sought to worship the true God, yet she was not saved. She had turned away from the wicked idolatry prevalent in her culture to a purer religion, but she still needed salvation.
3. A person can turn away from certain sins and bad habits, exercise religious devotion, yet still not be saved. Why is this? It is simply because these things cannot wash away our sins. At the end of the day, we are all sinners before God and stand guilty and stand in need of salvation. Only Jesus can provide it.
Romans 3:9-10, 23-24
4. The conversion of Lydia teaches us the Bible principle that salvation is not only needed by wicked people, but also by "good" people.

Second, salvation is of the heart.

1. In verse 14, it says, "...whose heart the Lord opened."

2. Salvation is not in outward actions (going to church, performing religious rituals, etc.). People can do all these things, yet their heart is never changed.
3. Salvation is not in saying or repeating a prayer. What comes out of the mouth must be a reflection of what is in the heart or it's meaningless. Romans 10:8-10
 - **Illustration:** You can say something with your mouth, but be thinking something else in your heart.
4. If people will not take on a heart attitude of humility as sinners and believe in their heart that Christ died for their sins, they cannot be saved. Matthew 15:8-9

Third, salvation is of the Lord.

1. Who opened Lydia's heart? The Lord.
2. We must never forget this as we witness to others about Christ (Romans 1:16). People are not won to Christ by our charisma, clever arguments, winning personality, or subtle manipulations.
3. People are won to the Lord by the power of God which alone can open the heart of man. When we witness to others, God's Spirit must convict the heart if they are to receive God's truth. If not, their heart will be like a brick wall.
4. What moves God to open the heart of a lost sinner to the gospel? It happens in answer to prayer. Either the person who is lost is praying and truly seeking God's truth, or another person is praying **for** them. 1 Timothy 2:1, 4
5. I don't know of a person who has been saved that didn't have somebody praying for them, or they themselves were praying for God's truth to be revealed to them. Paul knew that prayer was the key. 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Colossians 4:3-4, Romans 10:1
 - Why don't people come to the truth and be saved? 2 Corinthians 4:4
 - How are people loosed from Satan's blinding bondage? Matthew 17:21
6. As we care and we pray and we share the gospel – all of this works together, and the Lord moves and opens the heart of lost loved ones, friends, co-workers, etc.
7. If we don't pray and share the gospel, the Holy Spirit will not move and convict hearts and bring people to salvation.