



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?**  
**Wk. 48 A Tale of Two Ladies / Pt 1 Liberating Freedom**  
**By Pastor Jody May 08/27/2023**

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**Acts 16:11-16 ESV**

**The Conversion of Lydia**

<sup>11</sup>So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, <sup>12</sup>and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. <sup>13</sup>And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. <sup>14</sup>One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. <sup>15</sup>And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

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**[READ THE TEXT]**

**[PRAY]**

**[INTRODUCTION]**

A Tale of Two Ladies (covers two weeks) is actually only a tale of one lady today, but I liked the first title more. More importantly what you will see over the next three weeks is how does the **Liberating Freedom of the Gospel** as delivered by Christ, how does it work? It is a case study, if you will, of the power of the HS, how it frees the unregenerate, among different sexes, different social structures, different classes, and different cultures.

Today you will witness a woman named Lydia, she would be known back then as an Asian, but today in our world she is a southern European. She is wealthy, she is a God fearer, and she **is liberated by public discourse**. Next week we have a slave girl, a woman with no money of her own, a native Greek, tormented by evil spirits, and **liberated by a powerful exorcism**. Lastly, we will meet a Roman jailer, a blue-collar joe, that is **liberated through powerful miracles and personal testimony**. All three are examples of Jesus' Gospel



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emancipation graciously given to people captured by the world in different ways.

Today's story of Lydia reminds me of a woman I know, Rosaria Butterfield that wrote one of my favorite books, "[The Gospel Comes with a House Key](#)". In that book you will meet an educated and successful woman ([Biography](#)), that rose to the top of the education ranks, embracing all the trappings of feminism, chose a lesbian identity, and embarked on a radical, leftist, college career promoting the LGBT agenda. Over a few years though, Jesus liberated her through the testimony of some faithful Christians and a diet of scripture, she left it all, submitted to authority of Jesus, married a minister, and now promotes Christian Hospitality as the door to which Jesus can liberate others.

Make no mistake, when the Gospel comes for people, **it doesn't just propose freedom to people, it delivers!** It gives people an alternative to being enslaved to the world that never offers more than **more slavery** whether it's to an ideology, or a man-made class system, a skin color, a culture, whatever manifestation of a worldly TRIBE that is popular at the moment. The Gospel removes the individual out of the crosshairs of worldly definitions based on relationship affinities.

But what you will see this morning and over the next three weeks if one desires to be freed from a prescribed worldly limitation then one must take on another yoke. That is, "**To be freed from the world one must be enslaved to Jesus**". Absolute freedom, there's no such thing, you are either for the world or against it, you are either for God or against Him, you cannot serve two masters! Paul said it like this, in his opening of the letter to the church at Rome, what many believe to be the pinnacle of Christian Doctrine:

**Romans 1:1**

Paul, a **servant** of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Servant - δούλος (*doulos*). n. masc. **servant, slave**. Refers to someone who is the property of another. Paul is saying, I myself when I left my life as a servant



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of the temple, of Phariseeism, of Judaism, I was bought with the blood of Christ making me His slave, I am owned. This is how Paul sees it for all those he talks to about Jesus. The way you are being saved is you are being bought, and the title is being transferred from the world to Christ.

**Romans 6:22**

But now that you have been **set free** from sin and have become **slaves** of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

You and I are set free / **liberated**, when the ownership is transferred to God, then and only then, will the fruit of your life, what is produced in and through you, will become a part of your sanctification. You have been set free for good works, you have been set free to be conformed in His image, you have been set free for eternal life. You have NOT been set free, just for the sake of it, BUT you have been saved for a purpose. **"Salvation is Liberation for the purpose of Living for Christ."**

Now before we go any deeper into this idea of Liberation and how did it play out for Lydia, I want to introduce the first stop in Acts, in Paul's second missionary travel.

**[REVIEW/LOCATION]**

<sup>11</sup>So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, <sup>12</sup>and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days.

We just picked up a new crew for this new adventure Silas, Timothy, and Luke so now the 4 of them set sail following the vision Paul had in 16:9 where a man from Macedonia/Greece was calling for them to come, saying they needed help.

They sail to Samothrace, one night stay, which btw was home to a pagan cult. Paul and the guys don't even attempt anything there which goes to show us just because people are desperately wicked doesn't always mean it's the right



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time to evangelize. That takes practice to learning how to listen to the HS as we said last week, we need to practice discernment, and learn from people that know how to do that. They land at Neapolis, the whole journey only taking 2 days, that is a quick journey being that it took them 5 days to come back this way. When God makes you an appointment, He's going to keep it.

From Neapolis they make it to Philippi, which is the big city in that area. Neapolis was its' port town and Philippi is ten miles inland. Philippi also sits on a very famous Roman Road called the



Egnatian Way that runs from Troas up through Bithynia under the Black Sea all the way to the Aegean Sea. This road was more than 600 miles long and one of the 29 great military highways that Rome used to transport supplies and ensure safe trade. Egnatian Way became the way of Evangelism where many of our early church fathers used to take the Gospel back and forth, as seen by the evidence that most of the 7 churches you read about this week in Revelation were on this road.

Philippi, was named after Alexander the Great's father, King Phillip of Macedonia. This city was in the middle of several skirmishes between Rome, and after 42 BC it was enlarged again when Antony defeated Brutus & Cassius. In 31 BC Octavius granted the city of Philippi colony status: no more federal taxes! Along with that, the Roman military helped retired military to settle there so this town became known as a little Rome, or *little Italy* if you will, and had a very Roman feel while being allowed the freedom to govern itself. One could say, in a very similar fashion, it was allowed to grow like our country did, governing itself and building its' reputation, through self-governance, on the back of its' retired veterans.



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I also need to bring up that starting next week we are starting a **40 day study on the book of Philippians**, and we are equipping the church with a 40 day devotional to help tackle the key themes in Philippians like: how to have joy in adversity, unity by humility, the Supremacy of Christ, and Pressing towards the Goal, or let's sum all that up to say **how to enjoy your servitude to God Almighty**.

So, the next three weeks you will learn about those **people that helped start the church**, those that Paul would have in mind, as he writes the letter to the Philippians. You will get a flavor for the people that would be there, enjoying their liberation, and perhaps it will help you understand why Paul loves them so much.

This is the town that Paul is walking into now as we head into our discussion today of **how Jesus liberates His people**, and today's example is how He liberates the person who at least is headed in the right direction. Three ways this happens: Liberation begins with a desire to know God, Liberation happens through the gift of gracious hearing and understanding, and liberation is solidified by requested examination and submission.

1. Liberation begins with a **desire to know God**.

<sup>13</sup> And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.

Ok, no Paul didn't change the game plan. There was no synagogue here, but Paul found the second-best thing. You see it takes at least 10 Jewish men to start up a synagogue so Philippi it seems didn't even have this going for them. But what our travelers did hear about was a collection of people going to the riverside on the Sabbath to pray. That was the giveaway you see, these folks were going there to pray on the Sabbath, it's a sign of God worshippers. In Babylon while in dispersion the Israelites would go down to the river for prayer since they had no temple, this is a good sign for Paul, it seems that in Philippi that there are some that have a desire to know God.



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What they find are some women, and that is important to note and stop here for a second and make some observations. **Women are very essential, necessary, and are a blessing for the church.** Many times, in the book of Acts women have essential roles in the creation and formation of the church. You will not see them in scripture as pastors or doing the work of preaching though, the Bible does not contradict itself in this teaching ([1 Tim. 2:11-12](#)). But what you will find always in the church is the complimentary lifestyle of men and women working together for the sake of the Gospel, keeping to traditional male and female roles as defined by God through biology, reflecting well the creational order that we see in Genesis. It takes both the sacrificial work of men and the submissive work of women for the church to stay alive and thrive.

Paul was going to find today, the backbone of the church of Philippi, not its' head, but one of its' most supportive members.

**<sup>14</sup> One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God.**

Lydia was from a section of country know as Lydia, from the city of Thyatira. She is an independent, educated, businesswoman, that is also raising a family. Thyatira has always been a producer of Purple dye, up to the 1900s using the Madder Root. They also used a type of shellfish from this region to make an even deeper purple that was sold to royalty. This is a high profit business as they have a monopoly on this type of pigmentation.

Women in Macedonia (Greece/Europe) were noted for their independence and by law if they were freeborn and had 3 children, they could conduct business for themselves. If they were freedwomen and had 4 kids, they could do the same. Women were given the opportunity to bank, carry on estates, and buy properties.

The Gospel came to this independent entrepreneur but as you can see all her independent achievements were not enough for Lydia, **she went looking for God.** She took the day off, she honored God on the Jewish Sabbath, met





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other true God worshippers there, to hear about Him and to pray to Him. And because she was humble, because she didn't get carried away with her achievements, independence, and money, God allowed Himself to be found!

**Psalm 119:2 ESV**

"Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, **who seek him with their whole heart,** "

**Hosea 6:3 ESV**

"Let us know; let us **press on to know the LORD**; His going out is sure as the dawn; He will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

At HCC one of our Behavioral Values, that means an attitude of the Heart is to **SEEK God**, it is only by seeking God are we ever truly free or liberated as Jesus told us:

**John 8:32 ESV**

"and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you **free.**"

Our world today tells women your freedom comes through the work of Feminism. Feminism says you can abandon God's creational intent for one of your own choosing. But see Feminism, by philosophy claims **equity** (no partiality on basis of sex) is cherished above all, then Feminists must bow to the rights of Transgenderism and its' encroachment into everything woman, for **that too is equity**. NO, the **Gospel proclaims equality**, while differing between the different roles of men and women for the good of each other.

Lydian was a socially liberated woman, BUT she knew she still needed God, and her answers were not found in who she could become. Ladies are you of the same character as Lydia, are you still humble, do you still need a God that saves you, are you seeking Jesus, and does your life among men reflect that? Scripture says if we seek Him with all our heart and we are humble we will find Him and we will find freedom from this world's attempt as stereotyping us. That's a lesson for us all in here isn't it?



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2. Liberation happens by the **gift of gracious hearing and understanding.**

<sup>14</sup> One who **heard us** was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord **opened her heart to pay attention** to what was said by Paul.

Lydia, is defined now NOT by a condition set by Luke or Paul it is a condition set by God, she is **one that heard them & paid attention....** In the Greek there to pay attention means to **take heed** or to **make a decision based on what is heard.**

This all happens first by the action of God in the phrase the **Lord opening her heart** SO that she could do it. What does that mean? If there is no initiating activity by God, then there is no heeding unto the Gospel. Here new identity in Christ was defined, delivered, and declared by God Himself, as it is with all men, **no one comes to the Father but by Christ (John 14:6)**. Jesus explains this to us.

**John 8:47 ESV**

“Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

**John 10:27 ESV**

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

Lydia heard the voice of God not because she was educated, or because she was a good person, she heard because of **GRACE**. Luke said the Lord did the work He opened her ear. That’s what we pray for every week before we ever start to preach that the Lord would open the ears of His people that we may hear His voice, receive His correction, know His love, and be changed by a gift of Faith. Paul makes a note on this again in Romans on how this works:

**Romans 10:14-17 ESV**

<sup>14</sup> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they





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are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” <sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Paul had walked up and down the Egnatian Highway multiple times and he had come to know, that it was God’s will that His children would come to faith by listening to the preaching of the Word of God. Understanding is a gift of grace, and it comes through the careful deliberation of the preaching of God’s Word.

**This clarifies a few things for this church today.**

- One, I (we) am not responsible for saving anyone, God is, He does the work.
- Two, it helps me to know what to pray for specifically, that the Gospel would be delivered to the lost by a person that can explain it to them.
- Three, I want to spend my time increasing the amount of Bible teaching here at HCC above all else, increasing the number of teachers and opportunities for God’s Word to be preached.

For you today that means when we begin to offer more opportunities in here for that exact thing you will need to decide to get in line with our convictions and help by your attendance and help by exposing the Gospel to people around you.

3. Liberation solidifies by **requested examination** and **service**.

<sup>15</sup> And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have **judged me** to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And **she prevailed** upon us.

Lydia was definitely persuasive. We don’t know who made up her home, but she made them listen to these men as well. Parents do your kids see the same sense of urgency in your life to hear the Word of God, do they see the submission to it and witness your repentance because of it? God will use that



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to open up their ears. If it is imperative for mom and dad to be under God's Word, then guess what parents, your kids will come to believe the same. If you find yourself not in public obedience to it, and your kids see that, don't complain when they don't listen either.

After the whole event Lydia requested two things: **judge me and then let me serve you**. According to Feminism she would be blamed for bending a knee to the Patriarchy, to surrendering her rights as a woman, for betraying all women everywhere. After Baptism she doesn't question God, she puts their faith to the test and asks for confirmation in do they really believe God changed her? That's some nerve, that is definitely a brave woman, asking examination of the men who would now start out as her spiritual leaders.

She goes on to prevail upon them not to take 'no' for an answer. It was the same word used by the men on the road to Damascus when they insisted on Jesus supping with them after the resurrection. Lydia demanded the opportunity to be hospitable to these men, she demanded that they make use of her home, her money, her time, she was serving these men graciously how God had created her to do and there is a lot of honor in that.

**[CHALLENGE]**

Lydia had been liberated and it was set in motion first by her humility in seeking God. She had a thirst to know the living God and He honored Her request, and called these men to Philippi, so she could hear the good news (first European convert). Family, God will honor your wishes as well.

**Jeremiah 29:13 ESV**

*You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.*

When you seek God more than trying to fit into this world by some preconceived standard by lost people, you will actually find where you belong, identified as His child.

Lydia he been liberated by the Grace of God, it wasn't because she was worthy or willing, He opened her ears to the call of Grace. Friend today I first I want



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to encourage you all to spend more time hearing the Word of God. Spend more time reading it, spend more time listening to sermons, spend more time reading the dead guys' books of theology. Let God transform your mind by the word, and then spend more time in the company of those seeking God as well. Spend time praying with His people, seeking Him out together, God honors corporate worship.

Lydia had been set into action as a believer by her liberation. She offered up examination to her life by these men, and insisted they use her own home as a base of operations for this new church. One of the things that church members need to practice more is radical hospitality.

This woman had a lot of gumption, a lot faith, and the people around her were better off because of her..

**Proverbs 31:30 ESV**

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Ladies this is a woman worth modeling for she was modeling the humility and servanthood of Christ. Men, you would do good to model her as well for as successful as she was in her job, it came in third place to her relationship to Jesus and then her family. **When it came to evangelism, she brought the Gospel home to her house.** How are you leading your family to Christ, are you submissive to God's Word, do you insist upon others coming into your home to share time, a meal, and a conversation on Jesus? Let all we do be done to the Glory of our God in a response for Him opening our hearts to the truths about Jesus.



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**[PRAYER]**

**[COMMUNION]**

**[BENEDICTION]**

Go in the name of the Father, that liberated us by opening our hearts to the understanding of who His son is.

Go in the name of the Son, that liberated us from an eternal death, through paying the price of our freedom by His blood.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that convicts our hearts of sin, opens our hearts for radical hospitality, and empowers us for Gospel Proclamation.