

Sermon preached by MR.R.KINDERMAN at "Rehoboth" Chapel,  
Swindon, on Monday evening, 9th 1958.

Text: Acts XVI. v. 14,15.

Hymns: Gadsby's,  
434, 11, 427.

Reading, Acts XVI. v. 1-24.

"And a certain woman named Lidia, 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."

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These two verses, joined with what the Spirit of God has spoken of the sovereignty of His power, the way by which the ministry was brought into this particular part under His divine and gracious leadings, reveal and set before us the workings of the Holy Spirit, the way by which a sinner is led, and the only way by which a sinner can rightly enter into the ordinance of Believer's Baptism, and the spirit of that grace manifested within.

We have read the circumstances, and it was of a certain woman, and how the Lord touched her heart by the power of the word, In those days, when the word of God abounded and yet there was much persecution, and at this particular time no particular church formed in Macedonia, there were those godly women, according to the Spirit's declaration, who were wont to gather for prayer by the river side; and the Lord constrained and spoke particularly to Paul respecting this matter, that he was to go there. It is worthy of our notice in this, that everything that is of God, everything that is of His divine purpose of love treasured up in the eternal covenant of grace, is ordered of God. Every part of that covenant is ordered in all things. There is nothing small in the covenant. Many times we are left to ourselves to look at matters as being small; but everything in the covenant of grace has an eternal blessing. It is "ordered in all things, and sure." Nothing can hinder, nothing can take place to thwart the purposes of Jehovah. While I say that, I do not desire this evening to answer the objections of the enemy and his subtle working that would lead to licentiousness, but that the Spirit of God may lead our minds into the greatness of that truth; and here is an unfolding of it, that the Spirit of God has made manifest this truth, and every one who is in that covenant shall and must believe. God has appointed the time, the means, the way by which they shall be brought into life, that is, into newness of life, and there is a time, appointed by God when each vessel of mercy shall be born into the world. You whom the Lord has favoured with His grace, and one who now will soon put on the Lord by open profession, - may the Lord in His mercy grant you to look into the sweetness of that divine blessing, to see the ordering of His covenant mercy, that

"Parents, native place, and time,

All appointed were by Him."

O, my friends, what a mercy sometimes really to be enabled to give praise to God for all His wisdom displayed in the salvation of His church, in every vessel of mercy, and that there is a time appointed, not to propose. I know, my friends, there are many prayers of you who fear God for those you love, but the grace of God is not a proposition; it is not left to creature. That is mercy. You have sung of mercy. It is divine dealings, it is divine grace, it is divine power; and though the Spirit of God works according to His Own pleasure, - as Jesus tells us, as the wind so is every one that is born of the Spirit, - yet it is a clear, distinct, perfect work. It is known. You may fear, you may be exercised about your own case, you may often come into darkness; but it is known; it is a power, a divine power; it is life which flows from Christ to every member of His mystical body, and will, until the church are saved to sin no more. And, my friends, and my young people here, amid all the commotions that are taking place, this world is kept in being for the elect's sake, and when that work is accomplished by God, time will be no more. O, what a mercy to be numbered amongst them!

But I do want just to come to this, in hope the Lord may grant us a little sweet entering in by His power and His mercy. There was a certain woman gathered with them, brought from a land far distant from Macedonia; and she worshipped God; gathered together like we are, I hope, in the exercise of the Spirit; and she heard the preaching. Ah, my friends, you may look into your case and one may now look into his own case, - the power of the preaching, when you may have heard many faithful servants of God, many sermons, either read or preached; the Spirit of God, goes forth with power and accomplishes His purpose. May we never be left to limit His power! Those sermons may have been read or preached faithfully, and may have had no appearance of any good, but there was a time appointed by God. I say, "A time appointed;" as I have mentioned, "not to propose, but call by grace."

"Whose heart the Lord opened." My dear friends, that is the work of the Holy Ghost; and a solemn work, a gracious work; and I must say here that, unless this is effectually manifested, a sinner can hear the most faithful declarations of truth from the beginning of his understanding even to the day of death, and never have any effect, never have any gracious teaching, never have an opening up of the things of Christ. Very solemn! And it is worthy of our notice because hearing the word itself, gathering together, is not sufficient. Ah, if the Lord touch our hearts, as He did this one, we see the effect. There will be no forsaking the truth of God; there will not be that solemn word needed to be spoken, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." But there will be a power.

"Whose heart the Lord opened;" and in the opening of her heart there was this effect, that she "attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul." I would desire to look at this. A great truth! I feel we are gathered in this way and it would be solemn, most solemn, to go through this ordinance if this grace had not been granted. If I may say, my friends,

on that point, the way of God's divine ordering, (which I believe as a people we hold in meeting to hear the experience of those who desire to follow in the ordinances of God,) is in love, in grace, and in desire; and yet how solemn a matter! A solemn responsibility in respect to the church of God, and yet gracious. What need of grace! But O, my friends, this comes to the personal teaching. Many of us have put on an open profession of the Name of Christ, and it has been much on my mind, it was from last evening particularly, and I can say in this personally, Do I know the reality of this truth, "whose heart the Lord opened.?"

I feel there are two particulars in that. There is an opening of the knowledge of self. If there is no opening of the heart, no knowledge of our own case, then the Lord Jesus Christ will still remain as "a root out of a dry ground." There is no form nor comeliness to the natural mind in the Lord Jesus. There is no beauty to nature, to desire Him, which is a solemn proof that we are born in sin, shapen in iniquity. We may be naturally very religious; and I do not speak that in a hard spirit, but I do speak it to draw forth this, that that is in the grace of the Spirit. But if the Lord has opened our hearts we shall know that we are sinful creatures, that we need a Saviour, that we are altogether defiled, and that there is no hope shut up or left in ourselves.

But it opens up also another truth graciously, that the preaching of the gospel becomes precious. O, can you look to a time, - I thought as you were singing the opening hymn, I would that that good Spirit may exercise our minds to be exercised, that we may be refreshed in our spirits to look into the workings of divine grace, and that it may have the effect, as it had on Lydia, that we may desire if we have been found faithful to the Lord, that there might be an abiding in the house,

"No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home."

O, how her heart was touched with mercy! How her heart was drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ! How the preaching of the gospel in the revelation of the Person and work of Christ was precious to her soul! That is bound up in this. And from that gracious opening her heart was drawn in love to Jesus Who was the hope of her salvation, and of His mercy, of which you sang, and as one who desired it to be sung I believe has felt.

"Whose heart the Lord opened." O, what a sweet work that is, when there is something inwardly feeling, when you look into the truth of Christ, when, as a destitute sinner, as one that had no hope shut up nor left, the preciousness of the work of Christ came with divine power. That is the mercy. I believe this opens up that which she heard; she heard the declaration of Him Who was despised and rejected of men, Whom Paul and the apostles proclaimed as the only ground of hope, as the only God of salvation, as the true and living God in Whom are all the treasures of grace. And as she heard, look back a moment; can you look to that time - may the Lord refresh it! - when Christ was first made known and felt in the power of His truth? You may say, "Well, that seemed very simple; I seem to know little, I feel to know feebly of the truth of Christ." But can we look to this, when it was with

power, when that precious atonement was made manifest by the proclamation of truth in the soul? This is opened up. "Whose heart the Lord opened." O, the Lord Jesus Christ was precious to her; His atoning sacrifice was precious; there was no other ground of hope of heaven for this one now. This was manifested in this, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul; that is, she was made willing to go without the camp and bear His reproach. There is no willingness to-day either, separate from the love of Christ in the soul. What made you willing? What draws a poor sinner, a needy sinner, a hell-deserving sinner, in willingness? Only His grace. Her heart was opened to receive that truth, that this is indeed the Christ, this One that has come but has been despised of man, set at nought by man, and set at nought by those builders, those false ones, who would dethrone Him. But there were a people. I felt that this case, and the case of the church, are in that prayer of the Lord Jesus. O, how gracious that truth, and that was opened up to her heart: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things," - the things of Christ, the things of His eternal glory, they are hidden from the wise and prudent, but they are revealed, and they are revealed to babes; and babes, my friends, are such as the Spirit of God opens the heart and brings them into that place to need teaching, instruction, wisdom, that alone can come from God Himself.

The power of the Holy Ghost descended upon this woman; and I felt in reading these two verses, this is the Spirit's teaching; every one in God's electing love and mercy is brought into this grace, and this is the way by which the Spirit leads. "Whose heart the Lord opened." Opened to receive the testimony of the truth of Christ, that her hope was built "built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." Sweet testimony! How her heart was drawn in love to Jesus! As the apostle preached and she heard, so the testimony of that truth was received in an honest heart. How that testifies of what the Lord Jesus said, of him that received seed into good ground! O, my friends, what mercy! God's elect are "good ground" hearers under the divine Spirit; one here and another there, one of a city and two of a family, under the sovereignty of God's grace, brought into this divine mercy, and the heart opened, grace given to receive the testimony of the truth that this is indeed the Christ, that this is the Son of God, that this is the One Who has come and has sacrificed for the sins of His church, Whose blood alone can cleanse from all sin. And that is mercy. I felt as you were singing that hymn, here was a case that could relish and enter into the truth of that theme of mercy.

"Whose heart the Lord opened" to receive the way of mercy through the preciousness of the atonement of Christ; and, having received that, then, my friends, there was love. "We love Him," says the apostle, "because He first loved us." His love was shed abroad in her heart. That must be first. I say it in love my friends, we can never rightly enter into this ordinance only as love is first put into our souls by divine grace. It flows from that; and as the Spirit of God does that, and opens the heart, and as love flows in, that love flows out. It is as the love of Christ is made known by the eternal

Spirit that that flows out to Him. O what precious grace! Ah, "a woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira," - all ordered by God in His divine providence, appointed by God to be brought to this place, - "which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened." Ah, she heard by the hearing of faith. O, what gracious teaching! What mercy, my friends, when you hear the word of God by the hearing of faith, and when you receive it! Without faith it is impossible to please God. Why, there was prayer went out of her heart, there was worship went out of her heart. Not her natural heart. O, this proves divine life entering, divine power, the work of God, that which He Himself breathes in and which goes back to Him. What God implants, my friends, goes back to Him; it is His Own grace, and it can do no other. That is a wonderful mercy. I felt this opened it up. It can do no other. God Himself has testified, they shall be made willing in the day of His power. O, there is a day of power, the power when the Spirit of God comes, when there is the hearing. You look into your case. Can we testify? - a company gathered together this evening from the world. O, that we might be helped in some humble measure, and that that same Spirit may go forth with power, that there may be still many who shall enter into this, hearing the word, and the Lord open the heart.

"Whose heart the Lord opened;" and as the truth of Christ entered with power, with authority, with the sweetness of His grace, that the Lord Jesus Christ should condescend to do so much for a sinner, that drew out her love, that is, in the truth of it. That is the power of His grace. Why, my friends, that is the gospel, that is His grace. What can bring real repentance but His goodness? Why, there is a repentance that needeth not to be repented of, and that flows from His love. When the heart is opened, when you see the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit brings that to the soul and speaks as the poet says, "All this was done for you," O, what a receiving by faith! My dear friends, if that good Spirit come into your soul and mine even now, and grant us a little feeling of that grace, I know what that will do; that will draw out our love; we shall bless God for the mercy of His wisdom and grace in Christ, in the gift of His dear Son; we shall bless the Lord Jesus Christ for His mercy and love in condescending to come and bleed and die for such sinful creatures; and we shall bless the eternal Spirit for sealing that grace in our hearts. My friends, I believe that is included here; that is brought. Well, I hope we have a little feeling of it; I hope we speak from the testimony of it.

"Whose heart the Lord opened." O, she received the truth, the truth as it is in Jesus. She saw by precious faith the mercy of that way made over to her by which such a sinner as she, "who must for ever lie in hell, were not salvation free," might be brought to heaven. That is true. That is in this gracious leading of the Spirit. I felt it opens it up. "Whose heart the Lord opened;" and that drew out love. What else can draw

"Love so amazing, so divine," says one,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Not a fleshly demand; but the gracious drawing of the Spirit of God. "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." And, my friends, that brought no little exercise of mind, when you consider the day in which she lived, the persecution of those that loved the Lord Jesus Christ. But I say, she was made willing now to go without the camp and bear His reproach. She was made willing in love to Him; in return there was a gracious exercise of love in her soul to Him and those who loved His Name. This is the love of the Spirit. This is a love, my friends, which is of grace, not in the flesh. This was the power of the Spirit; not a loving of the apostle Paul and those servants in the flesh, but for the truth, and a love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a desire to walk in those ways which He has appointed. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." This is the yoke of love. It brings in its train the same path, in some measure, as the Master Himself walked; yet it is love's constraining, and this was what the Lord did in her soul, and He does it in the hearts of His dear children. "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

She was made willing to attend to those things which are the fruits of the grace of God within; a love to His Name, a love to His cause, a love to His ordinances; and, my dear friends, this ordinance in the obedience of faith. It is in love's constraining; and as it is here opened up, there is no merit to salvation, but it is the gracious fruit of the Spirit of God within, it is love to the Lord Jesus. Her heart was so touched with His love that now in return she felt a desire, and was constrained, to manifest her love and allegiance to her crucified, but now exalted, Redeemer. O, my friends, what sweet grace!

"And when she was baptized." By the mercy of God she was openly enabled to follow Him. No light matter. It was before the Lord. That must come first. One will soon, before you as witnesses, put on the Lord Jesus by open profession; but, my friends, in reality it is before the God of heaven. It is witnessed by a Three-One Jehovah; and, as it was in the case of this woman, where it is that the Lord has opened the heart, where His love abounds, where Christ as the only hope of salvation is felt and received, and that hope is made manifest, I say, my friends, there is joy, there is the approbation of God. I have desired that that approbation may rest upon us. It is not with words of flattery of the creature; there is nothing to draw in the flesh in the ordinances of God's house. It is simple, gracious; but where under the Spirit's teaching, as it was on this occasion, it has the approbation of the God of heaven, that is mercy. And to have that felt in the soul is a great blessing, and is an earnest of eternal bliss. I say, my friends, on that point, as I have felt much lately, everything in the covenant is precious, and so precious that it has the mark of salvation and eternal blessing stamed upon it.

"And when she was baptised, and her household." There was such a drawing of love to the gospel of the grace of Christ that they were made willing to walk in the ways of that despised One, and His despised servants, and His church;

and that is still the same. It is despised by the flesh. I am not speaking now of how far flesh may go in the falseness of that which is contrary to the truth, but, my dear friends, in the spirit of it, it is despised by the flesh; but it is owned of God.

But I did feel to desire just to join the verses: "And when she was baptised," - put on Christ by an open profession of His Name, desiring that there might be a union to His church. I could not help but feel in this the sweetness of the way by which a sinner with hope in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ is made a partaker of that precious and sacred ordinance, given here to the church of God, of the Lord's Supper. "This do, as oft as ye eat it and drink it, in remembrance of Me." O, my friends, the sweetness of that grace! I hope there is a testimony in many of your hearts; and it was brought to my mind to-day, - I hope I have known once or twice the sweetness in partaking, a melting in love, that such sinners should be so favoured. And, my dear friends, those that gather at the table of the Lord's ordinance are sinners! Ah, if there are any here like Ruth, who feel not like the handmaidens of Boaz, and feel that those that gather around that Table are something beyond or better, you are much mistaken. Those that gather at that Table are sinners indeed, whose only hope is in the finished work of Christ; and this is the way ordained by God, and left to His church here, as the way by which there is a partaking of that grace. And what mercy! I felt it is wrapped up here. She was baptized, and her household; and the sweetness of that grace was upon her spirit; and "she besought us," says the apostle by the Spirit, "if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there." That is the sweet workings of grace, sweet humility, sweet drawing, faithfulness to the Lord, willingness to walk with those that are despised and scorned by the world. We read in this chapter that this very apostle was persecuted, he was beaten with stripes, his clothes rent from him; but here was one who was made willing to walk in that way, and willing to be despised, and willing now in love to Christ to walk the way the Master went. No light matter! We are exhorted by one of the hymnwriters, concerning the solemn ordinances for which we are gathered, "View the rite with understanding." O that we may be helped to view it; Here was one that viewed it aright. She viewed it, my friends, by faith in Christ. But, her hope being in Him, she was enabled by divine faith to honour her Master, her Lord, her God, her Christ. What sacred union! My friends, the ordinances of God manifest the sacredness of a living union to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ; - not to be trifled with; and yet a sinner, a sinner deserving hell, I say, was blessed by the Spirit of God with faith in Christ, and enabled by that grace to walk and manifest a living union to the Lord Jesus Christ. He walked this way; He has perfumed this way; and, my friends, it sets forth the sacredness of His death. "Buried with Him in baptism." Buried to all hope in self, buried to all hope of ever fulfilling the law in self." We shall go through the ordinance as this one did and was baptised. That sets forth the truth of Christ, that He has fulfilled the law; and it sets forth a sinner's testimony of no hope of fulfilling it in self, that Christ by His Own death, His Own sufferings, has perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and risen in newness of life. Arising from this,

my friends, is the testimony of the witness of the Spirit's power in that sacred union to a living Christ Who has become the only hope of one's salvation. What a sacred truth! O that the Spirit of God may descend upon us as He did upon this one, that we may feel the power of His truth, that we may feel the mercy of the opening of the heart, that divine entrance of life in all that that means, in all its power, - and that, my friends, done for ever! The Lord will perfect that which concerns His people. Once the Lord has come, - that opens up another part of truth that I will not enter into, only to say this, that every work of God is pure in this, that that work can never be erased; that is done. The Lord will chasten, He will rebuke, He will correct His children, but, my friends, that work of grace is complete.

"Once in Him, in Him for ever;  
Thus the eternal covenant stands."

This was done in this woman; and through that mercy she was enabled to attend unto the things which were spoken by Paul, the testimony of the gospel of the grace of Christ, and the fruits of it in love and faithfulness to Him in this sin-stricken world. And the mercy is, God has still a remnant, and may the mercy of God rest upon us, and the sweetness of this testimony be felt!

"And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord." O, to be made willing to be judged by the God of heaven, willing to be judged by the testimony of those in whom the truth of God is! Ah, there is a willingness then. There was a willingness to be judged by Him Who is the Judge of all, and those to whom this grace is given, by His church, in that humble measure and sweetness. She says, "Abide at my house." My dear friends, I believe it can be said in this, I hope in many of your hearts, and the fruit of it manifested,

"No more a stranger, or a guest,  
But like a child at home."

The Lord bless these few thoughts, and grant that we may be enabled to feel that sacred power and approbation of God resting upon us!

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