

Open Heart - cont.

of how God one day would take away the “stony heart” from the people and give them “one heart” (Ezekiel 11:19-20). Jesus also spoke of people with closed hearts (Matthew 13:14-15). Each person is different. For example, the people on the day of Pentecost who heard Peter preach were “pricked in their heart” and obeyed (Acts 2:37), while those who heard Stephen preach were “stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart” and disobeyed (Acts 7:51).

What Is Your Heart Condition?

We are told in the Bible that the heart thinks (Proverbs 23:7), the heart loves (Matthew 22:37), the heart desires (Romans 10:1), the heart believes (Romans 10:10), the heart purposes (2 Corinthians 9:7), and the heart intends (Hebrews 4:12). Is your heart “open” to do each of these great things?

Lydia went to God’s emergency room, if you will, to get “open heart surgery”. God’s word, like a scalpel was used to open her heart (see Hebrews 4:12). The Lord “opens” the heart of mankind through the preaching and explaining of his word (see Luke 24:32,44-45; Acts 26:16-20). Is it time for you to check in for your “open heart” surgery? - *Chris Reeves*

Sentence Sermons

- Your destiny is not determined by chance, but choice.
- Some people seem to fall for everything and stand for nothing.
- Self-discipline is one of the foundation stones of true character.
- Some people are like rocking chairs - full of motion, but they make no progress.
- It is good to be wise, and it is wise to be good.

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Open Heart Surgery: The Conversion of Lydia

And on the Sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spoke unto the women that were come together. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

- Acts 16:13-15 -

Lydia a Seller of Purple

In Acts 16, Paul travelled to the city of Philippi in Macedonia on his second preaching trip from Antioch (Acts 16:6-15). During this trip, a woman named Lydia, and her household, heard the gospel and were baptized. They became the first Christians on the European continent.

What do we know about Lydia? Lydia, we are told, was a seller of purple. She had a good job, she worshipped God away from home, she

heard the truth in a common-place setting, and she paid attention to God's word while Paul preached to her. We are told in this story that God opened Lydia's heart "to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul." Lydia received "open heart surgery" on this occasion!

Whose Heart The Lord Opened

The statement about Lydia's heart being opened (Acts 16:14) is used by some denominational preachers today to prove a "direct operation of the Holy Spirit". They say that God uses the Holy Spirit to make a person hear and obey. They call it a "direct operation of the Holy Spirit" or "irresistible grace" (the fourth point of John Calvin's five points). Allegedly, the person operated on by the Holy Spirit, like Lydia, cannot refuse the Holy Spirit and must hear and obey.

Because of the man-made doctrine of "irresistible grace", many today believe and teach that God, via the H.S., makes one hear, understand what one hears, and makes one obey what one understands.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Yes, the Holy Spirit is clearly at work in this story (see Acts 16:6-7), but not in the manner commonly assumed. The text

says "whose heart the Lord opened". Clearly, the Lord opened Lydia's heart. But how? The issue is this: Did the Lord "open" Lydia's heart directly (a direct operation of the Holy Spirit) or indirectly (through the preaching and hearing of the Holy Spirit's words)?

Consider the facts and order of events in this story. We are told that Paul and Barnabas 1) "sat down and spake unto the women", and 2) "a certain woman ... heard us", and 3) "whose heart the Lord opened", and finally, 4) "to give heed". You see, before we read about the Lord opening Lydia's heart, we read about her hearing the word for herself. "To give heed" (Greek *prosecho*) means "to attend;" "to fix the mind"; "to hold to" (see Acts 8:6,10,11). When Lydia heard the preaching, the Lord opened her heart through the preaching. The opening of the heart by the Lord was done by the preaching and hearing of the word. So, the Lord opened Lydia's heart indirectly through the preaching and hearing of the word. And this is how the Lord still does it today.

Open Hearts

Is your heart open or closed when God's word is preached? Ezekiel spoke