

Approaching God

Read this portion Psalm 32 and begin with an opening prayer

Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin. - (Psalm 32:1-5)

If we hold our sins inside, hoping to hide them, they fester and poison the whole system. God is the only one who can do anything about sin. Confession is the act that brings sin out into the open and lets God take care of it. Start with a short time of confession to start your time today.

Acts 16:11-24

Passage Introduction: The Gospel at Philippi

Luke begins to slow down his narrative considerably in verses 11-15, particularly as it concerns the conversion of Lydia. When a biblical author starts providing this much detail, he wants to highlight a critical development within the narrative. Lydia runs a business which sells “purple goods” (v 14) and is therefore probably a fairly wealthy woman. The color purple denoted royalty, and served to identify an individual as part of the political establishment of the Roman Empire.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

“The Lord opened her heart” - Lydia’s conversion reminds us of God’s sovereignty in salvation. The Lord opens the hearts of sinners to receive the gospel. No one can say they came to the Lord because of their intellect, spiritual sensitivity, or morality. Rather, as with Lydia, the Lord opens our hearts so we can repent and believe.

Acts 16:11-24 - 11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. **12** From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. **13** On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. **14** One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. **15** When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.

Notes:

17 She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” **18** She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her. **19** When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. **20** They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar **21** by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.” **22** The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. **23** After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. **24** When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- What are 2-3 things you learn about God in this passage and the mission of the Gospel?
- Lydia opened her home to the missionaries (v. 15). How can your home become a place of ministry?
- Compare the encounters of Paul and Silas with Lydia, with the slave girl, with the girl’s owners, and with the magistrates. Describe each and how they turned out.

Key Takeaway:

How do the roles of God and of Paul in Lydia’s conversion encourage you to speak regularly and boldly of Christ? What will that mean, specifically, in the coming week?

Close in Prayer:

Consider new territories (whether physical or spiritual or both) where the Holy Spirit may be calling you to venture. Pray for wisdom, guidance and courage to follow the Spirit’s leading. Pray that you will be equipped physically and spiritually.