

OPEN MY HEART LORD!

Acts 16:11-15

A. Quote by Augustine...

B. The setting of today's text is the city of Philippi. Paul's on his second missionary journey with Silas, Timothy, and Luke. Following a harsh disagreement with Barnabas over a young man named John Mark, the latter two went to Cyprus and Paul's newly assembled team went to strengthen the churches and believers from his first missionary trip. After trying to go to a few different places and encountering closed doors, Paul had a vision of a man in Macedonia who says: "Come over to Macedonia and help us." (Acts 16:9) So what do you think Paul does?

C. Acts 16:12-14 *"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. 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."*

- 1) The phrase, *"The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."* is powerful and telling. When the Gospel is preached, this is what every preacher and sharer of the Good News wants to have happen. (Encounter street preachers in Lex, KY)
- 2) Often when sharing the Gospel we think the following things are most important: The presentation; the precise quoting of Scripture; the charisma and persuasiveness of the presenter (salesmen, lawyers or entertainers); appealing to and meeting the listener's felt needs; the setting (camps or concerts or soup kitchens or seeker sensitive churches); all of these things mean the message's success rests upon the shoulders of the sharers. But in Lydia's situation, despite having four renowned men of God present, it's God that opens her heart to respond...
- 3) I contend that if God doesn't open a heart to respond, there will be no true and lasting conversion... There's a big difference between conviction and conversion. When the Word is preached, what we're after is the God event, the deep and transformational impact of encountering God's love and atoning forgiveness even as His Spirit shines His light on our sinfulness and depravity. (Quote by Rev. Joseph Alleine)

D. Consider the following accounts with respect to conviction vs conversion:

- 1) A few weeks ago I talked about the contrast between the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus. Both men had conviction when it came to encountering Jesus but only one was converted...
- 2) Despite Stephen's incredible declaration of the Gospel, Saul rejected it and stood by approvingly as they stoned Stephen to death. It wasn't until Saul encountered Jesus personally on the road to Damascus that his eyes were blinded even while his heart was opened. *Don't you want to see more Sauls turned into Pauls?*
- 3) Think it's just more religion and Bible thumping that's necessary? When Philip ran up beside the chariot of the Ethiopian official who *'just happened'* to be reading Isaiah 53. Philip asks the man if he knows what he's reading. He said he was clueless. Here's what he was reading (Isaiah 53:7-8): *"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He did not open His mouth. In His humiliation He was deprived of justice. Who can speak of His descendants? For His life was taken from the earth."* (Acts 8:32-33 NIV) God opened the eunuch's heart to respond to the Gospel as Mark explained it and he met Jesus and insisted on being baptized...
- 4) While dying on the cross, Jesus was mocked by just about everybody--Jewish leaders, Roman soldiers, and two thieves on the cross. But in their dying moments, one thief had a change of heart. Who was preaching or reading Scripture to him? It was God at work through the prayers of Jesus hanging next to him and the work of the Holy Spirit that opened his heart to reach out to Jesus.
- 5) It was God at work in the prodigal son that turned his heart towards home and back to his father. It was God at work that made one healed leper out of ten return to Jesus. It was God at work in the heart of a man blind from birth that refused to back down to Jewish leaders who wanted him to recant. It was God at work in the heart of Syrophenician women who knew she was a gentile dog yet she Jesus could deliver her daughter from demonic oppression. Following Paul's powerful testimony, King Agrippa may have been convicted but his heart wasn't opened. (Quote by John Piper)

E. How many of you know you cannot save yourself? How many know you can't get someone saved? How many of you know you personally are not the winner of souls to Christ? But with God all things are truly possible and He can open hearts to respond to the Gospel you share...

F. Perhaps you have heard me preach for many years and maybe a time or two you've even been convicted. Do you understand that conviction isn't the same thing as conversion? I may say the right words to make you feel convicted but I really can't do anything to achieve your conversion--God has to do that... Ask Him to open your heart!

G. And lets say you are a regenerated believer in Jesus and in His transformational process. With respect to being changed into His likeness, conformed into His image, do you realize that with regards to un-surrendered areas of

your life and all matters of the flesh, conviction and conversion are still two different matters. I can preach and you may feel guilty, convicted to the core, but converting your heart to agree with His is something neither you or I can accomplish. Change is still a matter of the heart and something the Lord has to do. The Gospel is as relevant to our sanctification as it was to our salvation. We're saved by God's amazing grace and transformed by His amazing grace as well!

"What's going on inside of me? I despise my own behavior! This only serves to confirm my suspicion that I'm still a man in need of a Savior!" ("In the Light" by Charlie Peacock)

* Romans 7:24-28 & 8:1...

* That's why we sing, *"Change me heart oh God, make it ever true..."* That's why we pray with all fervor and diligence, *'Lord open my heart, by the power of your Holy Spirit, that I may respond to Your Word... Let conviction lead to conversion, genuine change to my heart... Bless me with the gift of repentance, that by grace and with gratitude I may be enabled to walk in faith and obedience to all You have commanded...'*

* Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Acts 16:11-15 (NIV)

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.

Quote by Augustine

"I was weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when I heard the voice of children from a neighboring house chanting, *"take up and read; take up and read."* I could not remember ever having heard the like, so checking the torrent of my tears, I arose, interpreting it to be no other than a command from God to open the book and read the first chapter I should find. Eagerly then I returned to the place where I had laid the volume of the apostle. I seized, opened, and in silence read that section on which my eyes first fell: *"Not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy; but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."* No further would I read, nor did I need to. For instantly at the end of this sentence, it seemed as if a light of serenity infused into my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away."

- Augustine, *Confessions*.

Quote by Joseph Alleine

"It is one thing to have sin alarmed only by convictions, and another to have it captivated and crucified by converting grace. Many, because they have been troubled in conscience for their sins, think well of their case, miserably mistaking conviction for conversion."

- Rev. Joseph Alleine (1634-1668), *An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners*, 1672.

Quote by John Piper

"Minimizing the importance of transformed feelings makes Christian conversion less supernatural and less radical. It is humanly manageable to make decisions of the will for Christ. No supernatural power is required to pray prayers, sign cards, walk aisles, or even stop sleeping around. Those are good. They just don't prove that anything spiritual has happened. Christian conversion, on the other hand, is a supernatural, radical thing. The heart is changed. And the evidence of it is not just new decisions, but new affections, new feelings."

- John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*.

Song Lyrics from "In The Light" by Charlie Peacock (also D.C. Talk)

"What's going on inside of me? I despise my own behavior! This only serves to confirm my suspicion that I'm still a man in need of a Savior!"

Romans 7:24-25 & Romans 8:1 (ESV)

24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin... **(Chapter 8) 1** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Edifying Articles & Video Clips

"In The Light" by Charlie Peacock (Live at the Art House)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_aMSjIOFno

Conviction vs Change - Francis Chan

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSAnRU-4TIQ>

Conviction vs Condemnation - Darrin Patrick

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtWOghjXqp4>

The Nature of Conversion - Article by John M. Brentnall - Banner of Truth

<http://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2010/the-nature-of-conversion/>

"Change My Heart Oh God" - Eddie Espinosa

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEtsHWFE6-w>

"In The Light" - D.C. Talk (From Welcome to the Freakshow)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWq1XYxtIRs>

Bonus Stuff

John 1:12-13 (ESV)

12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Conversion Defined

The decisive act in which a sinner turns away from sin in genuine repentance and accepts the salvation that Christ offers. The imagery in conversion is that of turning. A person is going along a road and realizes that he or she is on the wrong track. They will never reach the destination if they continue in that direction. So the person "turns," or "is converted." He or she ceases to go in the wrong direction and begins going in the right one. Conversion changes the direction of one's course of life from the wrong way to the right way, the way that God wants.

- *The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, Walter A. Elwell, Editor, (Harold Shaw Publ., Wheaton, IL; 1984), p. 347.

Quote by George Whitefield

"There are so many stony ground hearers who receive the Word with joy that I have determined to suspend my judgment till I know the tree by its fruits... Do you think any farmer would have a crop of corn next year unless he plowed now? You may as well expect a crop of corn on unplowed ground as a crop of grace until the soul is convinced of its being undone without a Savior. That is the reason we have so many mushroom converts, so many persons that are always happy! happy! happy! and never were miserable. Why? Because their stony ground is not plowed up; they have not got a conviction of the law... they fall away... That makes me so cautious now, which I was not thirty years ago, of dubbing converts too soon. Now I wait a little, and see if people bring forth fruit; for there are so many blossoms which March winds blow away that I cannot believe they are converts till I see fruit brought forth."

Quote by Rev. Matthew Mead

"Never rest in convictions till they end in conversion. This is that wherein most men miscarry; they rest in their convictions and take them for conversion, as if sin seen were therefore sin forgiven or as if a sight of the want of grace were the truth of the work of grace."

- Rev. Matthew Mead (1630-1699), *The Almost Christian Discovered or The False Professor Tried and Cast*, p. 237.

Quote by John Piper

"Christ did not die to forgive sinners who go on treasuring anything above seeing and savoring God. And people who would be happy in heaven if Christ were not there, will not be there. The gospel is not a way to get people to heaven; it is a way to get people to God. It's a way of overcoming every obstacle to everlasting joy in God. If we don't want God above all things, we have not been converted by the gospel."

Quote by Cornelius Van Til

"So, as we have our tea, I propose not only to operate on your heart so as to change your will, but also on your eyes so as to change your outlook. But wait a minute. No, I do not propose to operate at all. I myself cannot do anything of the sort. I am just mildly suggesting that you are perhaps dead, and perhaps blind, leaving you to think the matter over for yourself. If an operation is to be performed it must be performed by God Himself."

- The Rev. Cornelius Van Til, Ph.D., *Why I Believe in God*, Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics, 1996, Barlow, Jonathan ed.

http://www.reformed.org/apologetics/index.html?mainframe=/apologetics/why_i_believe_cvt.html

Quote by Dr. Richard Alderson

"It is a sign of true conversion when a man's heart is melted to love God's eternal law and when his will is bent to obey it."

- Dr. Richard Alderson is a Senior Lecturer in English as a Foreign Language at Southwark College, London.
http://www.the-highway.com/law1_Alderson.html

Quote by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

"If the "grace" you have received does not help you to keep the law, you have not received grace."

- Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (1959), vol. I, p. 197. Inter-Varsity Fellowship.

Quote by John Bunyan

"Conversion is not the smooth, easy-going process some men seem to think... It is wounding work, this breaking of the hearts, but without wounding there is no saving... Where there is grafting there will always be a cutting, the graft must be let in with a wound; to stick it onto the outside or to tie it on with a string would be of no use. Heart must be set to heart and back to back or there will be no sap from root to branch. And this, I say, must be done by a wound, by a cut."