

Main Idea: In Acts 16 we discover how the Sovereign God of grace saves a sinner. As evidenced in verses 11-15, salvation involves two divine acts of preparation. This is true today as it was in the biblical event we’re about to investigate.

The Background: Here’s what is happening in Acts 16...

1. This is the fourth phase of the church’s mission.
 2. This is Paul’s second missionary journey.
- I. God prepares the situation (11-13).
- A. He guided the messengers to the right place (11-12).
 1. God’s agenda is to fulfill Acts 1:8.
 2. God’s agenda must be our agenda.
 - B. He guided the messengers to a ripe opportunity (13).
 1. We must look for prepared people.
 2. We must look for ways to proclaim the gospel.
- II. God prepares the sinner (14-15).
- A. Lydia came to the river (14a).
 - B. Lydia came to the Lord (14b).
 1. God opened her heart.
 2. God enabled her to respond.
 - C. Lydia gave evidence of her conversion (15).
 1. She was baptized.
 2. She made fellowship a priority.
 3. She began to use what she had for the Lord.

Make It Personal: Three valuable lessons for us...

1. We can be confident that God is preparing people for salvation.
2. We can be confident that God will save anybody who asks.
3. We can be confident that God will use us to reach the lost, if we are willing.

We have heard the joyful sound, Jesus saves! Jesus saves! This morning we’re going to marvel at that marvelous subject, the salvation of God. We’re going to open our Bibles and watch the sovereign God of grace save a sinner. We’re also going to praise Him for how He did so in many of our lives, and pray He will do so for others here and around us.

Scripture Reading: Acts 16:11-15

There are few things more wonderful than the privilege of being used by God in the conversion of a sinner. God is a saving God. He is rescuing people from the bondage of their sins and reconciling them to Himself through Jesus Christ. And He uses people to reach people. He gives us the privilege to participate with Him in the wonderful work of setting people free.

E.g.—

I’ve entitled today’s message, “*Watching the Sovereign God of Grace Save a Sinner.*” How good to know He is the Sovereign, and how breathtaking to watch the sovereign God of grace save a sinner.

We love sovereign grace at WBC. There are those who believe that God merely makes salvation *possible* through the work of His Son. And while that might sound wonderful at first, in reality it leaves us hanging. What if man rejects God’s salvation?

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Acts series at WBC in 2002.

Is God dependent on man's response? And if so, who is really in charge in this universe? God? Or man?

The Bible gives us good news, my friend. Salvation is of the Lord, from its design by God the Father, to its accomplishment by God the Son on the cross, to its application by God the Holy Spirit whereby He convicts sinners, draws them to Christ, opens their eyes to His beauty, and grants them repentance and faith in Christ, all by grace.

Sovereign grace. We are saved by grace through faith, and it is the gift of God.

E.g.—

No book illustrates this more powerfully than the second New Testament book penned by Dr. Luke, who wrote the Acts of the apostles. It's here we see the amazing record of what Christ did through His people to build His church in the first thirty years after He returned to heaven. To date we have examined the first sixteen chapters of Luke's account, which he wrote for his friend Theophilus (1:1). In this study we will pick up where we left off last time, at Acts 16:10.

The Background: Here's what is happening in Acts 16...

To appreciate what we're about to see, we need to keep in mind a couple of things.

1. *This is the fourth phase of the church's mission.* The Lord Jesus gave a mission statement to His followers in Acts 1:8 just before His ascension: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus said He would give His disciples power, Holy Spirit power, for a specific task. They were to be His witnesses to the world. You will be, He said, my witnesses. He was going to use His disciples to tell the world about what He had done at the Cross.

But it would not be haphazard. The Sovereign Lord had a specific plan in mind. The mission would involve four phases. You'll start in Jerusalem, He said. And they did, in Acts 2. Then you will be my witnesses in all Judea, and phase two happened on schedule as recorded in Acts 2-7. Then, phase three, you will go to Samaria, which again happened right on schedule (Acts 8).

Just one phase remained, the biggest of them all. Phase four—you will be my witnesses *to the ends of the earth*. Beginning in Acts 10, the followers of Christ began to reach the Gentile world, an assignment that's been ongoing now for nearly 2,000 years.

This, dear friends, is why we are a missions-minded church. We must be. Phase four isn't finished yet. There are still unreached people groups on this planet. God has chosen to reach them, too. And to use *us*.

2. *This is Paul's second missionary journey.* In Acts 13 the missionary effort of the church kicked into high gear, so to speak, when the church at Antioch commissioned Barnabas and Paul for the first missionary journey. Following the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, Paul set out on his second missions trip (AD 49-52), this time accompanied by Silas. The duo traveled throughout Galatia on a return visit to the churches established on the first trip. They picked up another helper named Timothy in Lystra (16:3) and kept heading west. They tried to turn north into Asia, but the Spirit said no. They ended up in Troas on the coast of the Aegean Sea, wondering where to go next. The sovereign Lord didn't make them wonder long, for He gave Paul a vision in 16:9. Paul saw a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Who was this man? Some think it was Luke, but we're not told. We are told that they set out at once to go through the open door into what we today call Greece. The gospel was about to penetrate Europe. And when they arrived, their first convert would be, not a man but a *woman*, as we'll see.

Remember this as you read Acts. Luke gives us a *selective* history. There were thousands of people saved as the early church took the message of Christ to the world. Luke doesn't tell every story. But he does tell *some* so we will know how the Sovereign God of grace saves a sinner. We see three such stories in Acts 16, the first of which we'll consider today.

In Acts 16:11-15, we learn that salvation involves two divine acts of preparation.

I. God prepares the situation (11-13).

It's amazing to watch God at work. It's awesome to see His plan of reaching lost people unfold. I marvel at how He did it in my life. Nearly fifty years ago He used changes in Ohio's teacher certification guidelines to cause my father to change jobs. This meant a move for our family to a different town. It was in that town that we started attending a Bible-teaching church. It was there that God exposed me to the gospel and gave me a second birthday.

God indeed specializes in preparing situations. Sometimes He orchestrates a crisis to get a person's attention so he will see his desperate need for the Savior. At other times He uses blessings, such as the birth of a child, to remind folks of His goodness and of the fact that He deserves to be glorified in their lives. God is preparing situations all the time to seek and save lost people.

That may be why you are here today. When it comes to preparing situations, God starts with His messengers. He prepares people to reach people. Notice how...

A. He guided the messengers to the right place (11-12). "From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days."

The team expanded in Troas. Notice the pronoun "we." Apparently, Paul recruited Luke there. They left Troas—again, that's where Paul had the vision—and sailed northwest. The winds must have been favorable. The 156 mile trip from Troas to Neapolis took only two days, with a one night stop in Samothrace. The return trip for Paul on his third missionary journey would take him five days (Acts 20:6). There was literally "smooth sailing" this time, and the team must have sensed that God was up to something big.

Which He was. He always is. While His plan may not go as we expect, it's always on schedule.

After landing, the missionaries took a ten mile trek from Neapolis along the Via Egnatia, the Egnation Road, and ended up in Philippi. It was the right place, as we're about to see.

Philippi was an ancient city, but was renamed in 356 BC by Philip II of Macedon. It became a Roman possession in 167 BC. The most noteworthy historical event occurred there in 42 BC when the armies of Mark Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius in the decisive battle of the second Roman civil war. Consequently, the Roman emperor awarded the city the status of a Roman colony. That meant that Philippi

answered directly to the emperor and that its citizens were exempt from provincial taxes. Many Roman soldiers retired there. It was a very patriotic and influential city.

Luke devoted nearly an entire chapter to what happened in Philippi, taking time to tell us important information about the distinctives of this city. One commentator observes, “Quite clearly Luke displayed pride in the city he came to love. Some say he grew up and attended medical school there.”²

Whether that’s true or not we can’t be sure. But this we know. God had uniquely prepared these messengers for this ministry. Take Paul, for instance. He was a Jew, but also a Roman citizen. Would those two facts be significant in evangelizing Philippi? Indeed, they would. His Jewishness was the key to the first evangelistic opportunity in Acts 16. His Roman citizenship ended up being the key to another at the end of the chapter.

This brings us to a couple of implications.

1. *God’s agenda is to fulfill Acts 1:8.* To the ends of the earth, that’s where He’s going. He’s not an American God. He’s preparing people from every nation, language, and tribe for the gospel, as we heard Wednesday evening from Tom Carr who shared wonderful stories of first generation Christians in Nepal. Since that’s true, then this must be true as well.

2. *God’s agenda must be our agenda.* My friend, there’s a big world out there, and God wants us to see it. And there are neighbors out there too, and He wants us to see them. Are we looking for the prepared situations He has in store for us? To see them we must look for them, and be available.

Perhaps that’s why Paul didn’t stay long at Neapolis and went to Philippi. He was in tune with God’s agenda. He often went to strategic cities to do evangelism, like Philippi, and established a beachhead there. Then he equipped those disciples so they could reach out to the surrounding area after he left and moved to the next beachhead.

So first, we see God guiding the messengers to the right place. Next...

B. He guided the messengers to a ripe opportunity (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.”

It took ten Jewish males to organize a synagogue. Apparently, there were not enough Jewish men in Philippi to meet that criteria, only a group of women who gathered outside the city by the river. One commentator suggests this may have been a place in the open air or a simple building, and was located by the Gangites River about a mile and one-half west of town.³

On this particular day these God-fearing women gathered as usual, perhaps to recite the Shema, pray the Shemoneth Esreh, and read the Law and Prophets.⁴ But unlike previous Sabbaths, this time, to their surprise, some men showed up. And lo and behold, one of these men just happened to be a rabbi. It was a divine appointment.

Paul was a former student of perhaps the greatest rabbi of the time, Gamaliel, and he used that credential to open a lot of evangelistic doors. He commonly went first to the

²Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* . Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

³Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. 1983-c1985. *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* . Victor Books: Wheaton, IL

⁴ Kent Hughes, p. 212.

synagogue when he entered a new city. Because of his connections, Jewish audiences gave him the pulpit, expecting to hear great truth. And Paul used the platform to tell them about Jesus the Messiah.

I want you to think about something. To us, it may seem like a very insignificant beginning—just a handful of women in a man’s world. But that’s where Paul and his team went, and that’s what God used.

Again, it’s ironic that in his Macedonian vision at Troas Paul saw a *man*, but when he arrived he discovered that God had prepared an audience of *women*. Wiersbe notes that Paul opened his European ministry by attending a ladies’ prayer meeting!⁵

There are a couple of lessons here for us.

1. *We must look for prepared people.* They’re out there, and we’ll see them if we’ll look. And we must not overlook the “insignificant” people of society, either, for God’s norm is to choose the lowly of society, the unspectacular, and as He did with us, the undeserving (1 Cor 1:26-29).

Did you see them this week? That neighbor, that sales-clerk, that child running through your yard. God is preparing people for us to reach.

2. *We must look for ways to proclaim the gospel.* How did Paul reach Philippi? By preaching on the banks of a river and later in a jail cell. We must share Christ with the prepared people in our community, too, in our neighborhoods, in the care facilities, in the jails, in the lunch room, in our schools. We must look, dear friends. The opportunities to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ are all around us.

I wonder if you believe that God can use *you* to reach lost people. Quite frankly, a lot of church-goers aren’t convinced.

Leighton Ford shares the following, “I was speaking at an open-air crusade in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Billy Graham was to speak the next night and had arrived a day early. He came incognito and sat on the grass at the rear of the crowd. Because he was wearing a hat and dark glasses, no one recognized him.

Directly in front of him sat an elderly gentleman who seemed to be listening intently to my presentation. When I invited people to come forward as an open sign of commitment, Billy decided to do a little personal evangelism. He tapped the man on the shoulder and asked, “Would you like to accept Christ? I’ll be glad to walk down with you if you want to.” The old man looked him up and down, thought it over for a moment, and then said, “Naw, I think I’ll just wait till the big gun comes tomorrow night.” Billy and I have had several good chuckles over that incident. Unfortunately, it underlines how, in the minds of many people, evangelism is the task of the “Big Guns,” not the “little shots.”⁶

Brothers and sisters, we need to get rid of this notion that evangelism is the responsibility of the “big guns.” God’s agenda for reaching lost people involves each of us. Granted, we are gifted differently. But that’s what makes the outreach of the church possible. We are gifted differently. We will be able to minister the gospel to different people in different ways. And we can do so in confidence knowing that God is preparing situations, situations in which we can share the gospel, just like He did at Philippi.

⁵Wiersbe, W. W. 1997, c1992. *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament*. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

⁶ Leighton Ford, [Good News is for Sharing](#), 1977, David C. Cook Publishing Co., p. 67.

How does the Sovereign God of grace save a sinner? First, He prepares the situation, taking His messengers to the right place at just the right time.

II. God prepares the sinner (14-15).

Just as God prepares the messenger, He also prepares the recipient. In this case, it was Lydia. This is a wonderful scene. We are about to see the first recorded convert to Christ in Europe. Because of God's working in her life, Lydia did three things.

A. Lydia came to the river (14a). "One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God."

God saves all kinds of people. We might say that Lydia came from the upper end of the social scale. She was a businesswoman, a seller of purple. Barclay says that the purple dye had to be gathered drop by drop from a certain shell-fish and was very costly. Wealthy people and royalty wore purple clothing.

According to Luke, Lydia was actually not a local, but was from Thyatira, a city in Asia Minor, a city located in the Roman province of Lydia. It's possible that "Lydia" wasn't her actual name so much as her business identity. She may have been known as "the Lydian lady."⁷

And though Lydia may have come to Philippi for business reasons, unbeknownst to her God brought her for another purpose. He was about to change her eternal destiny.

It happened the day she came to the river. What happened?

B. Lydia came to the Lord (14b). NIV, "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." ESV, "The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul." That's a powerful statement, one that teaches us something vital about how God saves a sinner. The text says that God did two things for Lydia.

1. God opened her heart. This isn't the first time Luke emphasized the sovereignty of God in saving a sinner. In Acts 13:48 he wrote, "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and *all who were appointed for eternal life believed.*"

If the Lord opened Lydia's heart, what does that indicate about the condition of her heart prior to that moment? It was closed, just like the heart of every person prior to God's effectual work in salvation. Romans 3:10 says, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God." No one seeks God until God opens the person's heart.

This same word for "open" appears in the story of a deaf man in Mark 7:33-35, "After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue.³⁴ He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" (which means, "Be **opened!**").³⁵ At this, the man's ears were **opened**, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly."

Luke also used the Greek term in his gospel to describe what happened to the two disciples at Emmaus in Luke 24:31, "Then their eyes were **opened** and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight."

The Greek term *dianoigo* means "to open by dividing or drawing asunder, to open thoroughly (what had been closed)." In some texts it's used to refer to the opening of the

⁷ MacArthur, p. 92.

eyes and the ears. It can also mean to open the mind of someone, that is, to cause the person to understand something.⁸

In Lydia's case, God did what God alone can do. He opened her heart. Next...

2. *God enabled her to respond.* The KJV says, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." In the ESV, "The Lord opened her heart *to pay attention to what was said by Paul.*" In other words, after God opened her heart, the message made sense to her and she accepted it.

Perhaps you've wondered, "Why don't all people believe—like Lydia did—when they hear the gospel?"

Here's why. 2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Only those whose heart and eyes God opens will believe.

When I say these words to you, how does it make you feel? *Ani ohev otchem.* If I say them more loudly, does it help? If I spell them? No. You don't understand. I'm telling you in Hebrew, "I love you," but it doesn't affect you, other than perhaps annoying you. You don't have the capacity to receive that message.

That sort of illustrates what happens when you say to your unregenerate neighbor, "God loves you. He desires a relationship with you. He gave His own Son to rescue you." Those are just meaningless sounds to your friend's ear, and if you keep saying them, they become an annoying irritation.

But God opens hearts. This is why we do evangelism. If God didn't open hearts, our ministry would be in vain. But because He does, we have reason to share the gospel with compassion and boldness. God *will* open the hearts of those He has chosen to save.

The knowledge of God's electing love produces bold evangelists.

Lydia certainly isn't an isolated case. Paul said the same thing happened when he preached in Thessalonica. He describes the process in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

So God opened Lydia's heart and enabled her to respond. By the way, right here we see the answer to the common question, "What about those people who never hear the gospel?" The fact is, as MacArthur observes, "Lydia's conversion shows that God will reveal the fullness of the gospel to those whom He causes to honestly seek Him."⁹

What Jesus said in John 6:37 is clear, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." God will never reject a seeking heart.

There are tremendous implications here for the way we do evangelism and missions. God's part is the preparing. Our part is the preaching. We can preach with confidence because God is preparing people to listen, and He will open the hearts of those He has chosen.

Ponder what A. W. Tozer had to say about this, "Probably the hardest thought of all for our natural egotism to entertain is that God does not need our help. We commonly represent Him as a busy, eager, somewhat frustrated Father hurrying about seeking help

⁸Strong, J. 1996. *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible*

⁹ MacArthur, *Acts*, p. 93.

to carry out His benevolent plan to bring peace and salvation to the world; but as said the Lady Julian, ‘I saw truly that God doeth all-thing, be it never so little.’ The God who worketh all things surely needs no help and no helpers.

“Too many missionary appeals are based on this fancied frustration of Almighty God. An effective speaker can easily excite pity in his hearers, not only for the heathen but for the God who has tried so hard and so long to save them and has failed for want of support. I fear that thousands of young persons enter Christian service from no higher motive than to help deliver God from the embarrassing situation His love has gotten Him into and His limited abilities seem unable to get Him out of.”¹⁰

Dear friends, our God is not a frustrated father. He is the Sovereign God of grace who has chosen an undeserving people that He will rescue and bring into His forever family. Indeed, right now He is preparing situations, and preparing sinners for the ministry of His servants. That’s why Lydia came to the river and then to the Lord.

E.g.—

Because of God’s sovereign grace at work in her life, Lydia did something else.

C. Lydia gave evidence of her conversion (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.”

When God saves a sinner, there is always evidence of it, visible evidence. In Lydia’s case we see three external indications of the internal change.

1. *She was baptized.* There’s no such thing in the book of Acts as an unbaptized believer. When a person professed faith in Jesus, he or she made it public through baptism. Dear friend, if you claim to be a Christian but have never been baptized, I urge you to take this step of obedience. These are Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 28:19-20, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey what I have commanded you.”

It’s interesting that Lydia wasn’t alone in this step of public commitment. The members of her household were also baptized. Wiersbe comments, “The word ‘household’ implies that the members of the family (and the slaves) who understood the Word, believed and were saved, and then were baptized. There is no evidence that infants were baptized, here or anywhere else in the Book of Acts.”¹¹

If you’d like to know more about baptism, and also about becoming a part of this local church, I invite you to join us for our new members class that begins next Sunday at 9:30 meeting in the community center.

2. *She made fellowship a priority.* Luke says, “She invited us to her home.” When we become followers of Christ, we become part of His Body, the church. A true Christian values fellowship with other Christians. Lydia did. She invited the missionaries to her house, no doubt so she could learn more from them about Christ.

What about the person who says, “I don’t need the church. I’ve got the Lord.”? Lydia knew instinctively they go hand in hand. “*If you consider me a believer in the Lord,*” she said, ‘come and stay at my house.’” The desire for fellowship is evidence that a person is a genuine believer.

¹⁰ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 41.

¹¹ Wiersbe, W. W. 1997, c1992. *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament*. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill.

3. *She began to use what she had for the Lord.* She opened up her home. She began to use her food, her beds, her dining room table and chairs for the Lord's work. She must have been a woman of considerable means to open up her home to four men (Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy).

This is key. When we become a Christian, we stop looking at what we have as our own. It's the Lord's, and we find joy in using all that we have for Him.

That's why Romans 12:13 exhorts, "Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." Hospitality is to be the norm, not the exception. When Christ enters a sinner's life, He changes the sinner's attitudes towards his possessions. It's no longer, "This is mine, and I have a right to keep it." Rather it's, "This is now God's, and I have the privilege of using it for Him and His work."

Peter said the same thing in 1 Peter 4:9, "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." It's supposed to be an open-door policy for the Christian.

Is that how you view your house? Is it a place of ministry or a fortress where you hide out?

In 2018 Rosario Butterfield wrote a timely book, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, that I found very helpful. She defines hospitality as "using your Christian home in a daily way that seeks to make strangers neighbors, and neighbors family of God."¹²

She talks about what happens every Sunday after the worship service ends. "My favorite day of the week is the Lord's Day, and I want to share that day with others. Kent and I must open our home after worship to anyone who will come. We must. We remember what it is like to be a new Christian, to be single, to have secrets that get you alone and torment you, and to have no place to go after worship, the odd tearing apart of the body of Christ as each retreats to her own corner or clique while the benediction still rings in the air."¹³

Some other quotes...¹⁴

- I know I can't save anyone. Jesus alone saves, and all I do is show up.
- Practicing radically ordinary hospitality is your street credibility to your post-Christian neighbors.
- Invest in your neighbors for the long haul, the hundreds of conversations that make up a neighborhood, and stop thinking of conversations with neighbors as sneaky evangelistic raids into their sinful lives.
- We live in a post-Christian world that is sick and tired of hearing from Christians. But who could argue with mercy-driven hospitality?

Luke says Lydia "persuaded us" to stay. It's the same word used to describe how the disciples on the road to Emmaus pleaded with Jesus to stay with them. Lydia would have it no other way. She was so grateful to the Lord for His gift of grace that she insisted she use what she had to help His workers. She joined the team.

By the way, it's interesting to note the pronoun change in 17:1, from "we" to "they." That seems to indicate that when the rest of the team moved on, Luke stayed in Philippi. Wiersbe suggests Luke may have remained in Philippi to pastor the church after Paul left.

¹² Rosaria Butterfield, p. 31.

¹³ Butterfield, p. 111.

¹⁴ From a review by Danny Franks, <https://dfranks.com/2019/02/19/top-ten-quotes-the-gospel-comes-with-a-house-key/>

So...how does the Sovereign God of grace save a sinner? Simply put, He prepares the situation and He prepares the sinner. Now let's apply what we've learned.

Make It Personal: Three valuable lessons for us...

1. *We can be confident that God is preparing people for salvation.* God didn't send Jesus to make salvation *possible*. Jesus died to make salvation a certain *reality*. He said this in Matthew 20:28, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Jesus gave His life to pay the ransom for many on the cross. And He will bring those for whom He died to Himself.

Yes, God is preparing people for salvation right now. We can be confident of this.

2. *We can be confident that God will save anybody who asks.* Why did God save Lydia? From the divine perspective, it's because He chose her for salvation. From the human perspective, however, it's because she asked.

Let there be no misunderstanding, God will save anyone who asks. Yes, *anyone*. And we can be sure there will be people who will ask because He is opening hearts.

That's why we must go to the lost, fellow Christians. No one has even believed in Jesus without first hearing. And that's our task, to tell them.

So many people don't know how God saves a sinner. It's not by human effort. It's by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

3. *We can be confident that God will use us to reach the lost, if we are willing.*

Closing song: *I Know Whom I Have Believed* (#409)