

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LYDIA, THE FIRST EUROPEAN CONVERT.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING

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“Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple, from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”—Acts xvi. 14.

We may laudably exercise curiosity with regard to the first proclamation of the Gospel in our own quarter of the globe. We are happy that history so accurately tells us, by the pen of Luke, when first the Gospel was preached in Europe and by whom, and who was the first convert brought by that preaching to the Saviour's feet. I half envy Lydia that she should be the leader of the European band; yet I feel right glad that a woman led the van and that her household followed so closely in the rear.

God has made great use of women and greatly honoured them in the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Holy women ministered to our Lord when He was upon the earth and since that time much sacred work has been done by their patient hands. Man and woman fell together; together they must rise. After the Resurrection, it was a woman who was first commissioned to carry the glad tidings of the risen Christ. And in Europe, where woman was, in future days, to be set free from many of the trammels of the East, it seems fitting that a woman should be the first believer. Not only, however, was Lydia a sort of first-fruit for Europe, but she probably also became a witness in her own city of Thyatira, in Asia. We do not know how the Gospel was introduced into that city, but we are informed of the existence of a Church there by the message of the ascended Christ through His servant, John, to “the angel

of the Church in Thyatira.” Very likely Lydia became the herald of the Gospel in her native place. Let the women who know the truth proclaim it; for why should their influence be lost? “The Lord giveth the word; the women that publish the tidings are a great host.” Woman can be as powerful for evil as for good: we see it in this very church of Thyatira, where the woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, sought to seduce many from the truth. Seeing, then, that the devil employs women in his service, let those women whom God has called, by his grace, be doubly earnest in seeking to prevent or undo the mischief that others of their sex are working. If not called to public service, all have the home-sphere wherein they can shed forth the aroma of a godly life and testimony.

If the Gospel does not influence our homes, it is little likely to make headway among the community. God has made family piety to be, as it were, a sort of trademark on religion in Europe, for the very first convert brings with her all her family. Her household believed and were baptized with her. You shall notice in Europe, though I do not mean to say that it is not the same anywhere else, that true godliness has always flourished in proportion as family religion has been observed. They hang a bell in a steeple and they tell us that it is our duty to go every morning and every evening into the steeple house, there to join in prayer; but we reply that our own house is better for many reasons—at any rate, it will not engender superstition for us to pray there. Gather your children together and offer prayer and supplication to God in your own room.

“But there is no priest.” Then there ought to be. Every man should be a priest in his own household and, in the absence of a godly father, the mother should lead the devotions. Every house should be the house of God and there should be a church in every house. And when this is the case, it will be the greatest barrier against priestcraft and the idolatry of holy places. Family prayer and the pulpit are the bulwarks of Protestantism. Depend upon it, when family piety goes down, the life of godliness will become very low. In Europe, at any rate, seeing that the Christian faith began with a converted household, we ought to seek after the conversion of all our families and to maintain within our houses the good and holy practice of family worship.

Lydia, then, is the first European convert, and we will review her history as far as we have it in Holy Writ. Towards her conversion, four things co-operated, upon which we will speak briefly. First, *the working*

of Providence; secondly, *the working of Lydia, herself*; thirdly, *the working of Paul*; and fourthly, *the working of the Holy Spirit*.

I. First, notice THE WORKING OF PROVIDENCE. When I was in Amsterdam, I visited the works of a diamond-cutter where I saw many large wheels and much powerful machinery at work. And I must confess that it seemed very odd that all that great array of apparatus should be brought to bear upon a tiny bit of crystal, which looked like a fragment of glass. Was that diamond worth so much that a whole factory should be set to work to cut its facets and cause it to sparkle? So the diamond-cutter believed. Within that small space lay a gem which was thought worthy of all this care and labour. That diamond may be, at this time, glistening upon the finger or brow of royalty! Now, when I look abroad upon Providence, it seems preposterous to believe that kingdoms, dynasties and great events should all be co-operating and working together for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose in the salvation of God's people. But they are so working. It might have seemed preposterous, but it was not so, that these great wheels should all be working for the cutting of a single diamond. And it is not preposterous, however it may seem, to say that all the events of Providence are being ordered by God to effect the salvation of his own people, the perfecting of the precious jewels which are to adorn the crown of Christ for ever and ever.

In the case before us, the working of God's Providence is seen, first of all, *in bringing Paul to Philippi*. Lydia is there. I do not know how long she had been there, nor exactly what brought her there, but there she is, selling her purple, her Turkey-red cloth. Paul must go there, too, but he does not want to come; he has not, indeed, had any desire to come there. He has a kind of prejudice hanging about him still, so that, though he is willing to preach to the Gentiles, he scarcely likes to go out of Asia among those Gentiles of the Gentiles over in Europe. He wants to preach the word in Asia. Very singularly, the Spirit suffers him not, and he seems to have a cold hand laid on him to stop him when his heart is warmest. He is gagged; he cannot speak. "Then I will go into Bithynia," he says, but when he starts on the journey, he is distinctly told that there is no work for him to do there. He must not speak for his Master in that region, at least not yet: "the Spirit suffered him not." He feels himself to be a silenced man. What is he to do? He gets down to Troas on the verge of the sea and there comes to him the vision of a man of Macedonia who begged him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." He infers

that he must go across to Macedonia. A ship is ready for him; he has a free course, a favourable passage, and he soon arrives at Philippi. God brings Paul to the spot where Lydia was, in this strange and singular manner.

But the working of Providence was quite as much manifested *in bringing Lydia there*; for Lydia was not originally at Philippi. She was a seller of purple, of Thyatira. Thyatira was a city famous for its dyers. They made a peculiar purple which was much prized by the Romans. Lydia appears to have carried on this business. She was either a widow, or perhaps had had no husband, though she may have gathered a household of servants about her. She comes over to Philippi across the sea. I think I see them bringing the great rolls of red cloth up the hill, that she may sell at Philippi the cloth which she has made and dyed at Thyatira. Why does she come just at this season? Why does she come just when Paul is coming? Why does she come to Philippi? Why not to Neapolis? Why not press on to Athens? Why not sell her cloth over at Corinth? Whatever reason she might have given for her choice, there was one cause of which she was ignorant, which shaped her action and brought her to Philippi at that time. God had a surprise in store for her. She and Paul have to meet. It does not matter what their will is; their wills shall be so moved and actuated by the Providence of God that they shall cross each other's path, and Paul shall preach the Gospel to Lydia. I know it never entered into Lydia's heart, when she left Thyatira with her purple bales, that she was going to find Jesus Christ over at Philippi; neither did Paul guess, when he saw, in a vision, a man of Macedonia and heard him say, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us," that the first person he would have to help would not be a man of Macedonia at all, but a woman of Thyatira and that the congregation he should preach to would be just a handful of women gathered by the side of the little stream that runs through Philippi; neither Paul nor Lydia knew what God was about to do, but God knew. He understands the end from the beginning and times his acts of providence to meet our deepest needs in the wisest way.

"His wisdom is sublime,
His heart profoundly kind.
God never is before His time,
And never is behind."

What an odd thing it seemed that this woman should be a woman of Thyatira in Asia—and Paul must not go and preach in Asia and yet, when he comes to Macedonia, the first person who hears him is a woman of Asia! Why, you and I would have said, “If the woman belongs to Thyatira, let her stay at home and let Paul go there, that is the shortest cut.” Not so. The woman of Thyatira must go to Philippi and Paul must go to Philippi, too. This is God’s plan and if we knew all the circumstances as God knows them, we would doubtless admire the wisdom of it. Perhaps the very peculiarity of the circumstances made Paul more alert to seize the opportunity at Philippi than he would have been had he gone on to Thyatira. Perhaps the isolation of the strange city made Lydia yearn more after spiritual things. God can answer a dozen ends by one act. One of our evangelists tells of a man who was converted in a small Irish town and it was afterwards discovered that he and the preacher who led him to Christ, resided but a few hundred yards from each other in London. They had never met in this great city, where neighbours are strangers to each other, nor was it likely that they ever would have been brought into contact with one another here, for the man, who was a commercial traveller, was too careless to ever attend a place of worship in London. But to sell his goods, he went to Ireland, where, also, went the evangelist to preach the Gospel; and being somewhat at a loss to know what to do with his time, he no sooner saw the name of a preacher from London announced than he determined to attend the service, and there he met with Christ! We can see how natural this was in the case of which we know all the particulars—and it was doubtless as well arranged in the case of Lydia and Paul.

Now, I should not wonder tonight if there are a number of Providences that have worked together to bring some of my hearers into their places at this time. What brought *you* to London, Friend? It was not your intention to be in this city. Coming to London, what brought you to this part of it? What led you to be at this service? And why was it that you did not come on one of the Sundays when the preacher would have been here if he could, but could not be here by reason of his weakness? Because, it may be, that only from these lips can the word come to you, and only tonight, and you must come to this place. Perhaps there is someone who preaches the Gospel much better in the town where you live. Or, perhaps, you have had opportunities of hearing the same preachers near your own door, and you did not avail yourself of them. And yet God has brought you here. I wish we watched Providences

more. "Who is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." If the Lord should meet with you and convert you tonight, I will guarantee you that you will be a believer in Providence, and say, "Yes, God guided my steps. He directed my path and he brought me to the spot where Jesus met with me and opened my heart that I might receive the Gospel of His grace." Be of good courage, you ministers of the Gospel! Providence is always working with you while you are working for God. I have often considered the language of Mahomet, when, in the battle of Ohod, he said to his followers, pointing to their foes, "Charge them! I can hear the wings of the angels as they hasten to our help." That was a delusion on his part, for he and his men were badly beaten, but it is no delusion in the case of the servants of Christ. We *can* hear the wings of the angels. We may hear the grinding of the great wheels of providence as they revolve for the help of the preacher of the Gospel. Everything is with us when we are with God. Who can be against us? The stars in their courses fight for the servants of God; and all things, great and small, shall bow before the feet of him who trod the waves of the Sea of Galilee and still is Master of all things, and rules all things to the accomplishment of his divine purposes.

So much, then, for the working of providence.

II. The next thing is, THE WORKING OF LYDIA. God's intention is that Lydia shall be saved. Yet, you know, no woman was ever saved against her will. God makes us willing in the day of his power and it is the way of his grace not to violate the will, but sweetly to overcome it. Never will there be *anybody* dragged to heaven by the ears: depend upon that. We shall go there with all our hearts and all our desires. What, then, was Lydia doing?

Having, by God's grace, been made willing, the first thing was that *she kept the Sabbath*. She was a proselyte and she kept the seventh day. She was away from Thyatira and nobody would know what she would do, yet she observed the Lord's-Day carefully. She was abroad when she was at Philippi, but she had not left God behind her. I have known some English people, when they once reached the Continent, go rattling along, Sundays and weekdays, as if God did not live on the Continent and, as if at home they only observed the Sabbath because they happened to be in England, which is very probably the case with a good many. When they get away, they say, "When you are at Rome, you must do as Rome does." And so they take their pleasure on God's day. It was not so with

Lydia. There was no selling of purple that day; she regarded the Sabbath. Oh, I would to God that everyone would regard the Sabbath! May God grant that it may never be taken away from us! There is a plot now to make some of you work all the seven days of the week, and you will not get any more pay for seven days than you get for six. Stand out against it and preserve your right to rest upon the God's day. The observance of one day in seven as a day of rest materially helps towards the conversion of men because then they are inclined to *think*. They have the opportunity to hear and, if they choose to avail themselves of it, the probabilities are that God will bless the hearing and they will be saved.

Now, notice next that not only did Lydia observe the Sabbath, but *she went up to the place of worship*. It was not a very fine place. I do not suppose there was any building. It may have been a little temporary oratory put up by the river side, but very probably it was just on the bank of the river that they met together. It does not appear that there were any men, but only a few women. They only held a prayer-meeting: "where prayer was wont to be made." But Lydia did not stay away from the gathering. She might easily have excused herself after her long journey and the wearying work of setting up a new establishment, but her heart was in this matter and so she found it no drudgery to meet where prayer was offered. She did not say "I can read a sermon at home," or, "I can read in the Book of the Law indoors." She wished to be where God's people were, however few, or however poor they might be. She did not go to the gorgeous heathen temple at Philippi, but she sought out the few faithful ones that met to worship the true God. Now, dear Friends, do the same. You that are not converted, still attend the means of grace and do not go to a place simply because it is a fine building, or because there is a crowd, but go where they are truly worshipping God in spirit and in truth. If they should happen to be very few and very poor, yet go with them, for in so doing you are in the way of blessing. I think you will yet have to say, "Being in the way, God met with me." If it is what some call, "only a prayer-meeting," you will do well to go. Some of the best blessings that men have ever gained have been received at prayer-meetings. If we would meet with God, let us seek him diligently, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Though you cannot save yourself, or open your own heart, you can at least do what Lydia did: observe the Sabbath and gather together with God's people.

Lydia, being there with the assembly, when Paul began to speak, we find that *she attended to the things that were spoken*, which is another thing that we can do. It is very ill when people come up to the house of God and do not attend. I have never had to complain of people not attending in this house since the day I first preached in it, but I have been in places of worship where there seemed to be anything but attention. How can it be expected that there will be a blessing when the pew becomes a place to sleep, or when the mind is thinking about the farm, or in the kitchen, or in the shop, forgetting altogether the Gospel which is being preached to the outward ear? If you want a blessing, attend with all your might to the word that is preached; and of that we will speak more, by-and-by.

So far we have spoken upon the working of providence and the working of Lydia.

III. Now, next, THE WORKING OF PAUL, for this, too, was necessary. In order to the conversion of men, it is necessary that the person who aims at their conversion should work as if it all depended upon him, though he knows that he cannot accomplish the work. We are to seek to win souls with as much earnestness, prudence and zeal, as if everything depended upon ourselves; and then we are to leave all with God, knowing that none but the Lord can save a single soul.

Now, notice, Paul, wishing for converts, is *judicious in the choice of the place* where he will go to look after them. He goes to the spot where there should be a synagogue. He thinks that where people have a desire to pray, there he will find the kind of people who will be ready to hear the word. So he selects devout people, devout worshippers of the one God, that he may go and speak to them about Christ. It is sometimes our plain duty to publish the word from the housetop to the careless crowd, but I think you will generally find that more success comes when those on whose hearts the Spirit of God has already begun to work, are sought out and instructed. When Christ sent out his disciples on their first journey, he told them, when they entered a town, to, “Enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till you go thence,” evidently showing that even among those who do not know the truth of God, there are some whose hearts are prepared to receive it, who are of a devout spirit and in that sense are worthy. These are the people who should first be sought after. In the same limited sense was Cornelius, to whom Peter was sent, worthy to hear the glad tidings of great joy. His reverent spirit was well pleasing to God, for we read, “Thy prayer is heard and thine alms are

had in remembrance in the sight of God.” We must not, of course, think that these things give any claim to salvation, but rather that they are the expression of hearts prepared to receive the message of salvation, seeking the Lord, “if haply they might feel after him, and find him.” One of our greatest difficulties in these days is that so many have lost all reverence for authority of any kind, even God’s: having risen against human despotism, they also foolishly try to break God’s bands asunder. We are cast back on the infinite power of God when we come to deal with such people, but when we meet with others who are willing to listen and pray, we know that God has already begun to work. Now, dear worker, choose the person who is evidently pointed out to you by God’s gracious providence. Choose judiciously and try to speak with those with whom you may hopefully speak, and trust that God will bless the word.

When Paul goes down to the river, you notice that he is very *judicious as to his manner* of introducing his subject. He did not preach at all. He found only a few women; and to stand up and preach to them, as he did to the crowds at Corinth, or at Athens, might have seemed absurd; but we read this: “We sat down and spoke unto the women which resorted there.” He took his seat on the river’s bank where they were all sitting still at prayer. And he began just to have a talk. A sermon would have been out of place, but a talk was the right sort of thing. So he talked the Gospel unto them. Now, be careful of the way in which you go to work with people, for much of the result must depend upon that. Some people can be preached right away from Christ, for the moment you begin to preach they say, “Oh, thank you, I do not need any of your sermon!” Perhaps you could slip a word in edgewise. Just drop a seed in a crack, or leave a word with them, just one word. Say at once, “If you do not need any preaching, I do not need to preach to you. I am not so fond of preaching as all that, but I read a very curious story in the newspapers the other day!” And then tell the story and wrap the Gospel up in it. If they do not want pills, do not give them pills. Give them a bit of sugar! They will take the sugar and when they get it, there will be a pill inside. I mention this because we may miss opportunities of doing good through not being wide awake. “Be you wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” Paul, therefore, just sat down and had a friendly talk with the women who resorted thither.

But whether Paul preached, or whether Paul talked, it was all the same: he was *judicious as to the matter* of his discourse. He had but one subject and that was Christ; the Christ who had met him on the way to

Damascus and changed his heart; the Christ who was still able to save; the Christ who bled upon the cross, to bring men to God and cleanse them in His blood; the Christ in heaven, interceding for sinners; the Christ waiting to be gracious. Paul would not end his talk without saying, “Trust Him: trust him. He that believeth in him has everlasting life.” So, whether he preached or whether he talked, it was the same story of Jesus Christ and him crucified. That is how Paul worked. He might have acted very differently. If his heart had not been all aflame for Jesus, he would very likely not have spoken at all, or if he had, it would have been a commonplace remark about the weather. He might have been eager to learn the method by which the beautiful purple dye was obtained and not have remembered that gospel message, written long ago by Isaiah, which would come with special force to the hearts of his hearers: “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” He might have been so interested in his enquiries about Thyatira as to forget to speak of the way to the city of light. A dozen subjects might have claimed his attention if his heart had not been set upon one object. He could have spoken of his journeys and even of his plans without actually preaching Christ to them. He might have spoken about the gospel, as I fear we often do, and not have spoken the gospel, itself. Some sermons which I have heard, though faultlessly orthodox, have contained nothing that could convert anybody; for there has been nothing to touch the conscience or heart. Others, though very clever and profound, have had no possible bearing on the needs of the hearers and so it was little wonder that they were without result. But I am sure Paul’s talk would aim straight at the centre of the target; it was evidently addressed to the heart, for we are told that it was with the heart Lydia heard. After all, it is not our most orderly discourses, nor our most apt illustrations which bring people to Christ; but some little sentence which is slipped in unawares, or some burning word which comes straight out of our own heart’s experience. There would be sure to be many such that day in that earnest simple talk by the side of the river. Let us multiply such conversations if we would win more Lydias for the our Master’s Church.

IV. But, now, fourthly—and here is the main point—let us notice THE WORKING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD. Providence brings Paul and Lydia together. Lydia comes there because she observes the Sabbath and loves the place of worship. Paul comes there because he loves to win souls and, like his Master, is on the watch for stray sheep. But it would have

been a poor meeting for them if the Spirit of God had not been there also! So we next read of Lydia: "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." It is not wonderful that the Lord can open a human heart; for he who made the lock knows well what key will fit it. What means he made use of in the case of Lydia, I do not know, but I will tell you what might have happened. Perhaps she had lost her husband; many a woman's heart has been opened by that great gash. The joy of her soul has been taken away and she has turned to God. Perhaps her husband was spared her, but she had lost a child. Oh, how many a babe has been sent here on purpose to entice its mother to the skies! A lamb taken away that the sheep might follow the Shepherd! Perhaps she had had bad trade; the price of purple may have fallen. She may have been half afraid she would fail in business. I have known such trouble open some people's hearts. Perhaps she had had prosperity. Possibly the purple had gone up in price. I have known some so impressed with God's temporal blessings that they have been ready to think of him and turn to him. I do not know. I cannot guess and I have no right to guess what it was. But I know that God has very wonderful ploughs with which he breaks up the hard soil of human hearts. When I have been through the Britannia Iron Works, at Bedford, I have wondered at the strange clod-crushers, clod-breakers and ploughs made there by the Messrs. Howard; and God has some marvellous machines in his providence for turning up the soil of our hearts. I cannot tell what he has done to you, dear friend, but I trust that whatever has happened has been opening the soil so that the good seed may drop in. It was the Spirit of God who did it, whatever the instrument may have been, and Lydia's heart was "opened." Opened to what? To attend. "She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

So, first, her heart was opened *to listen very intently*. She wanted to catch every word. She did as some of you do, put her hand to her ear, for fear she should not hear all that was spoken. There are many ways of listening. Some people listen with both their ears, allowing it to go in one ear and out the other, like that wit, who, when he was being seriously spoken to, yet seemed very inattentive. At last wearied, the friend who was discoursing, said, "I am afraid it is not doing you much good." "No," came the reply, "but I think it will do this gentleman some good," pointing to one who sat beside him, "for as it has gone in at this side, it has gone out at the other." Oh, how I wish that you had only one ear, so that the truth of God you hear could never get out after it had

once got in! Well did the Lord speak through Isaiah the Prophet unto the people, "Hearken *diligently* unto me and eat that which is good." Many people can listen for an hour or two to a scientific lecture, or a political speech, without feeling in the least weary. They can even go to the theatre and sit there a whole evening without dreaming of being tired! Yet they complain if the sermon is a minute beyond the appointed time. They seem to endure the preaching as a sort of penance, scarcely hearing the words, or, at least, never imagining that the message can have any application to their own case.

Lydia's heart was so opened "that she attended," that is, she listened to the word of Salvation until she began *to desire it*. It is always a pleasure to entertain guests who relish the food placed before them, and it is a great joy to preach to those who are eagerly hungering after the truth of God. But how heart-breaking a task it is to keep continually praising the pearl of great price to those who know not its value, nor desire its beauty! Daniel was a man, "greatly beloved"; the Hebrew word means, "a man of desires." He was not one of your conceited, self-satisfied individuals. He longed and yearned for better things than he had yet attained and, therefore, was "greatly beloved." God loves people to thirst after him and to desire to know his love and power. Let us explain the gospel as we may, if there is no desire in the heart, our most plain messages are lost. A man said, about something he wished to make clear, "Why, it is as plain as A B C!" "Yes," said a third party, "but the man you are talking to is D E F." So, some of our hearers seem to turn away from the word of God. But when a person says, "I need to find salvation. I need to get Christ this very day and I am going to listen with the determination that I will find out the way of salvation," surely, if the things spoken are the same things that Paul spoke of, few in that condition will go out of the house without finding salvation! Lydia's heart was opened to attend to the Gospel, that is, to desire it.

But, next, her heart was opened *to understand it*. It is amazing how little, even well-educated people sometimes understand of the gospel when it is preached in the simplest manner. One is constantly being astounded by the misapprehensions that persons have as to the way of salvation. But Lydia had grasped the truth. "Thanks be to God," she said, "I see it. Jesus Christ suffered in our place and we, by an act of faith, accept Him as our Substitute, and we are saved thereby. I have it! I never saw it before. I read about a Paschal lamb and the sprinkling of the blood, and the passing over of the houses where the blood was sprinkled.

I could not quite make it out. Now I see, if the blood is sprinkled upon me, God will pass over me, according to his word, ‘When I see the blood, I will pass over you.’” She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, so as to understand them.

But more than that. Her heart was so opened that she attended to the Gospel so as *to accept it*. “Ah,” she said, “now I understand it, I will have it. Christ for me! Christ for me! That blessed Substitute for sinners! Is that all I have to do, simply to trust him? Then I will trust him. Sink or swim, I will cast myself upon him right now.” She did so there and then. There was no hesitating. She believed what Paul said; that Jesus was the Son of God, the appointed propitiation for sin and that whoever believed in him should, there and then, be justified; and she did believe in him, and she was justified; as you will be, my friend, if you will believe in him at this moment. You, too, shall have immediate salvation, my dear sister sitting yonder, if you will come, like this Lydia of old, and just take Christ to be yours and trust him now. She attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul, so that she accepted Christ.

Having done that, she went further—her heart was so won, that she was, by the Spirit, led *to obey the Word and confess her faith*. Paul told her that the gospel was this—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” He said to her, “My commission is, ‘Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.’” Perhaps she said, “But why must I be baptized?” He said, “As a testimony of your obedience to Christ, whom you take to be your Master and your Lord. And as a type of your being one with him in his burial, you are to be buried in water as he was buried in the tomb of Joseph. And you are to be raised up out of the water even as he rose again from the dead. This act is to be a token and type to you of your oneness with him in his death and burial and resurrection.”

What did Lydia say? Did she say, “Well, I think I must wait a little while—the water is cold”? Did she say, “I think I must ask about it. I must consider it”? No, not at all. Paul tells her that this is Christ’s ordinance and she at once replies, “Here I am, Paul, let me be baptized and my servants, too, and all who belong to my household, for they, also, believe in Jesus Christ! Let us have the baptism at once.” There and then, “she was baptized, and her household.” She did at once obey the heavenly message and she became a baptized believer. She was not ashamed to confess Christ! She had not known him long, but what she

did know of him was so blessed and joyous to her soul that she would have sung, if she had known the hymn—

“Through floods and fames, if Jesus lead,
I’ll follow where he goes;
‘Hinder me not,’ shall be my cry,
Though earth and hell oppose.”

You can imagine her saying, “Did he go down into the Jordan and say, ‘Thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness’? Then I will go where he leads the way and be obedient to Him and say to all the world, ‘I, too, am a follower of the crucified Christ.’”

Now, lastly, after Lydia was baptized, *she became an enthusiastic Christian*. She said to Paul, “You must come home with me. I know you have not anywhere to go. Come along. And there is your friend, Silas. I have plenty of room for him and Timothy, too, and also Luke. We can make room for the four of you among the purple bales, or somewhere, but, at any rate, I have house-room for you four and I have heart-room for forty thousand of you. I wish I could take in the whole church of God.” Dear good woman that she was, she felt that she could not do too much for the men who had been made a blessing to her, for she regarded what she did to them as done to their Lord and Master! They might have said, “No, really, we cannot trouble you. You have the household. You have all this business to look after.” “Yes,” she would answer, “I know that. It is very kind of you to excuse yourselves, but you must come.”

“No,” Paul might urge, “my dear good woman, I am going to find some tent-makers and make tents with them. We will find a lodging where we find work.” “Ah!” she would say, “but I mean to have you. You must come to my home.” “She constrained us.” She would probably put it thus, “Now, I shall not think that you fully believe in me if you do not come home with me. Come, you baptized me, and by that very act you professed that you considered that I was a true believer. If you really believe it, come and stay in my house as long as you like and I will make you as comfortable as ever I can.” So, at last, Paul yields to her constraint and goes to her home. How glad they would all be, and what praise to Christ would rise from that household! I hope that the generous spirit which glowed in the heart of the first convert in Europe will always continue among the converts of Europe till the last day. I trust that when they are called not merely to entertain God’s ministers, but to help all God’s people of every sort, they may be ready and willing to do it for Christ’s sake, for love shall fill them with a holy hospitality and an

earnest desire to bless the children of God. Love one another, Brothers and Sisters, and do good to one another, as you have opportunity; for so will you be worthy followers of Lydia, the first European convert, whose heart the Lord opened.

The Lord open your hearts, for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 16.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—531, 560, 589.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

The following letter, written by MR. SPURGEON, was read at the Tabernacle last Lord's-Day, September 13, 1891. There has been no material alteration in the dear sufferer's condition since he wrote this note:

Westwood,
Beulah Hill,
Upper Norwood,

September 13, 1891.

“DEAR FRIENDS—I cannot write much; but I cannot withhold my heart and my pen from saying, ‘O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!’ This week has, by its fine weather, set me free from a three months' captivity. Those believers of all denominations who so lovingly prayed for me will now help me to praise the Lord. Verily, the living God hears prayer.

“I fear my doctors would have a mournful tale to tell of my disease and from inward consciousness I must agree with them, but I *feel* better, and I get into the open air and, therefore, I hope my face is turned toward recovery. Reading, writing, thinking, etc., are not yet easy to me. I am forced to vegetate. I fear it will be long before I can be at my beloved work.

“I send my hearty love to you all, and my humble gratitude to that great army of praying people who have been heard of the Lord in their cries for the prolongation of my life. May we believe more, pray more and, therefore, receive more!

“Yours, in bonds of true affection,
C. H. SPURGEON”