

<sup>9</sup>During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." <sup>10</sup>After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

<sup>11</sup>From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. <sup>12</sup>From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

<sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>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. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. <sup>15</sup>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.

*There once was a woman named Lydia,  
Paul told her, "God wants every bit 'a 'ya."  
She knew in her heart, she could make a fresh start,  
And said, "Paul, baptize me, please now would ya?"*

Jesus performed amazing miracles—making blind people see, feeding 5000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fishes, walking on water. What Paul accomplishes in this story is about as impressive as any of these miracles because Paul is able to convince someone who has everything that she has nothing because she doesn't have Jesus.

*There once was a woman named Lydia . . .*

Lydia was a woman of influence and affluence. Scripture tells us that she was a dealer of purple cloth—a valuable commodity that was rare and treasured—a fabric reserved for only the richest and most influential of people. But Lydia didn't just have material wealth, she also enjoyed a wealth of family and, when Paul found her, she was spending time with a group of women, so it seems she enjoyed a network of friends in addition to having a family and being a successful business woman in Macedonia. From the outside looking in, it appears as if Lydia's really got it going on—she's like that rich aunt for whom it is nearly impossible to find a Christmas present because what could someone who already has everything possibly want?

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Indeed, Lydia probably had most everything she wanted because she was a person of means and was able to buy the things she wanted. BUT, she did not have what she needed—namely, she didn't have Jesus. She didn't have the feeling that "her life flowed on in endless song." "Through all the tumult and the strife" she did not hear the music ringing." Indeed, it was quite easy for Lydia to keep from singing, even though it might appear to those on the "outside" that she had plenty to sing about. But Paul knew better. Paul told her that God wanted something more from her than a charitable donation or an invitation to dinner. Scripture tells us that "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." Paul's message was one of grace—that no matter how much she earned or gave or saved or didn't earn or give or save—that in the end, none of it mattered because her salvation didn't rest in giving, earning, or saving—it didn't rest in what she said or did—but rather, her salvation rested in the hands of Jesus Christ, in whom and through whom she had already been saved.

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And Lydia knew, Lydia knew that she needed what Paul had to offer. She had caught the tune of the "sweet, tho' far-off hymn that hails a new creation." She heard the message of freedom—of being free from the pressures of this world—the pressures to do more, be more, have more . . . She gave up the illusion that she was in control and so gave up her need to control and instead turned over control of her life to God.

*No storm can shake my inmost calm,  
While to that refuge clinging;  
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth,  
How can I keep from singing?*

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And so it was that Lydia, upon hearing Paul's message of grace, opened her heart to the Spirit of God. She asked Paul to baptize her, and all of her family, and then Paul and his companion stayed at her home. Indeed, as it would happen, Lydia would be the first person baptized on European soil—thus she is sort of the mother of Christianity in Europe, making this a very appropriate reading for this mother's day. And like most mothers, she was a woman with a song in her heart, no longer able to keep from singing.

*Since first I learned to love it,  
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,  
A fountain ever springing;  
All things are mine since I am his--  
How can I keep from singing?*