

Acts 17:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Analysis

Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed—Despite Athens' overall resistance, some converts emerged. The verb *kollēthentes* (κολληθέντες) means 'joined closely, adhered to'—the same word used for marriage (Matthew 19:5) and for cleaving to the Lord (Acts 5:13, 10:28). These believers didn't merely assent intellectually; they attached themselves to Paul and the Christian community.

Among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite—Dionysius held a position on the prestigious Areopagus council, making him a man of significant social standing. His conversion demonstrates that the gospel transcends class boundaries. **A woman named Damaris** is mentioned by name (unusual in ancient texts), suggesting she was a person of some prominence—possibly a God-fearer or philosopher in her own right. The inclusion of **others with them** (ἄλλοι σὺν αὐτοῖς, *heteroi sun autois*) hints at a small nucleus for what may have become a church, though Acts doesn't record Paul returning to Athens.

Historical Context

The Areopagus was composed of about 30 wealthy, educated men who served as guardians of Athenian religion and morality. For Dionysius to believe required abandoning not just intellectual positions but significant social capital and religious responsibilities. Damaris's mention by name suggests she wasn't merely a household member but a person of independent standing—possibly a wealthy

patroness or educated woman who attended philosophical lectures (unusual but not unheard of in cosmopolitan Athens).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the conversion of a prominent official like Dionysius challenge assumptions about who is 'too educated' or 'too intellectual' for the gospel?
2. What does Luke's careful naming of both Dionysius and Damaris teach us about the equal value of male and female converts in the early church?
3. Why might God honor small beginnings (a handful of converts) as much as mass movements, and how does this reshape ministry evaluation?

Interlinear Text

τινὲς	δὲ	ἄνδρες	κολληθέντες	αὐτοῖς	ἐπίστευσαν	ἐν
certain	Howbeit	men	clave	them	and believed	among
G5100	G1161	G435	G2853	G846	G4100	G1722
οἷς	καὶ	Διονύσιος	ὁ	Ἀρεοπαγίτης	καὶ	γυνή
the which	and	was Dionysius	G3588	the Areopagite	and	a woman
G3739	G2532	G1354		G698	G2532	G1135
ὀνόματι	Δάμαρις	καὶ	ἄτεροι	σὺν	αὐτοῖς	
named	Damaris	and	others	with	them	
G3686	G1152	G2532	G2087	G4862	G846	

Additional Cross-References

Acts 17:19 (Parallel theme): And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

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