

Acts Chapter 16

- Chapter 15 ended with Barnabas and Mark headed off to Cyprus, and Paul and Silas headed back towards Galatia.
- The trip to Galatia must have been un-eventful which is why we pick up the account when they're already there in Derbe.
- One of the things that is difficult to gauge while reading / studying this book is the element of time. It's almost a little deceptive in the sense that it seems like times moves very quickly, but the events described in this book take place over a 30 or so year time frame, meaning it moves slower than we think.

Zechariah 4:10 “For who hath despised the day of small things?...”

- Things don't always just happen in a day, it takes time. You plant a seed, it takes time to germinate, to grow, to flower, and to bud. Ultimately it will bring forth fruit, in His time.

V: 1-2 (**Map**) Paul and Silas took an overland route to arrive in Galatia arriving first in Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium.

- During their first missionary trip 5 years earlier, Paul and Barnabas had healed a lame man in Lystra.
- The people, seeing this great power thought they were gods come down in human form and began to worship them. Paul and Barnabas stopped them from doing this and told them about the true and living God.
- The people turned against them and stoned Paul, dragging his body out of town to the dump.
- So now in Lystra Paul encounters a young man who would eventually become his “son in the faith,” Timothy. Timothy’s mother and grandmother were both Jewish believers in Jesus, and his father was a Greek.

2 Timothy 1:5 “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also”

- A Godly heritage that began with grandma. Way to go grandma!

- Timothy is a believer who has a good reputation amongst the brethren. He was connected to the church there in Lystra that Paul & Barnabas had planted on their previous trip through the area.
- The church that Paul and Barnabas planted was still alive, it was growing, and thriving. The real test in Christianity is in enduring, it's a long term commitment.

John 15:16 “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain:...”

V: 3-4 Paul saw Timothy's faith and giftings and saw that he would be very useful in ministry, along with Silas - building a team.

- Paul then took and circumcised Timothy, Timothy obviously allowed this - but it must have initiated some interesting discussion, especially in light of verse 4 where they were delivering the good news about not having to abide by the Law and be circumcised.
- This circumcision wasn't to gain favor with God or have a more righteous standing, it was about ministering to men and not stumbling them and keeping them from receiving the Gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:20-23 “²⁰And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; ²¹To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. ²²To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. ²³And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.”

Galatians 2:1-5 Paul would not allow Titus, a Gentile to be circumcised because the enemies of God's grace might think he was promoting their cause.

Romans 12:18 “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

- If it's within our power to do something, or to refrain from doing something, in order to stave off conflict, then that's what we should do, that's what Paul & Timothy are doing.
- Are we willing to give up our rights so that we won't unnecessarily cause someone else to stumble? Are we, like Timothy, willing to give up our liberty for the sake of love and effective ministry?
- Then they went about delivering the decrees from Jerusalem to both the Jews and the Gentiles that made up the church.

Acts 15:29

1. Abstain from meats sacrificed or offered to idols.
2. Abstain from consuming blood, from things strangled.
3. Abstain from fornication - sexual immorality.

V: 5 The churches were established in the faith, strengthened, and encouraged.

- Partly from a greater understanding of God's grace, and from Paul & Silas' teaching on other subjects. Circumcision wasn't the only issue the early church dealt with, it was just one of many.
- Healthy sheep reproduce and they increased in numbers daily.
- The Lord's desire is to bless His church and to add to His church, but that is completely up to Him.

Matthew 16:18 "... thou art Peter, and upon this rock (confession) I will build My church..."

- Men build corporations, and cathedrals, and mega-ministries, but only Jesus can build the church.
- Do we have a role to play in church growth? Yes.

Acts 2:42, 47b "⁴²And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." - "⁴⁷... and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

- When the church does what it's supposed to do and leaves what God's supposed to do to God, then it all works the way God wants it too.
- Just as there are things we can do to help church growth, there are things we can do to hinder it as well.
- Quenching or grieving the Holy Spirit hinders growth. What are some of those things?

Ephesians 4:30-31 "³⁰And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:"

To the Colossians he said:

Colossians 3:8 "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."

- If these things are allowed to exist within the church, they will quench the Spirit, and choke off God's blessings.
- If we keep ourselves in the love of God, and let that love spill into one another's lives, then we'll see the Spirit flowing through our fellowship.

V: 6-8 (Map) Having moved through Phrygia they intended to just continue due West on into Asia but the Holy Spirit stopped them.

- How did the Spirit forbid them? We're not told. Could have been through a prophesy like when:

Acts 13:2 "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

- Could have been through prophecy, a direct word, or it could have been indirect, they turned in the wrong direction and got sick, or became incapacitated in some way, or their travel arrangements didn't work out or some other physical impediment. God uses different things at times to guide us.
- So they turned North to Mysia and they were about to turn Eastward again toward Bithynia, a highly populated area, but again the Holy Spirit re-directed them to Troas which was quite a ways away.
- We might think well, what's the difference, why not share the Gospel everywhere? The Holy Spirit knows who is ready for it, it's Jesus' church and He calls the shots. The Gospel was eventually preached in Bithynia and many were saved.
- How do you know the will of God?

Revelation 3:8 "... behold, I have set before thee an open door..."

- We need to look for the open doors, and respect the closed doors.
- The issue is are we willing to incline our ears and hearts to take heed to the leading and guiding of the Lord for His church. Here we see that Paul and company were submitted to the Lord and willing to go wherever He said.

V: 9-13 Once at Troas the Lord speaks to Paul in a vision, saying head over to Macedonia, Macedonia being a region of Greece.

- When we're obedient to the first thing God tells us, then He generally gives us the next step, and the next.

- Paul responds “immediately” no hesitation - understanding the the Lord wanted the Gospel preached in Greece.
- It is at this point that Luke, the writer of this account and the Gospel that bears his name joins Paul, Silas, and Timothy. He goes from describing the events in third person to first person “¹⁰we endeavored to go ...”
- Departing Troas, the stopped briefly at Samothracia (Island), then the next day land in Neapolis. Then onto Philippi, the capital of Macedonia.
- Philippi was named after King Philip II, who was the father of Alexander the Great.
- Philippi is described as a “colony” which is the only time this word is used in the Bible. Philippi was conquered by Caesar Augustus and colonized by the Romans who intermingled with the natives.
- The advantage to being a Roman colony was that everyone born in Philippi became a Roman citizen.
- Paul has traveled now from Asia / Asia Minor to Europe proper. So this is where the Gospel was first preached in Europe. It’s also where Paul would be imprisoned and miraculously set free.
- As was their custom they looked for the synagogue on the Sabbath day to share the gospel with the Jews - they would always approach the Jews first - but there needed to be at least 10 observant Jewish men to establish a synagogue, so the fact that they met at the river was an indication that there wasn’t much of a Jewish presence in Philippi, truly a Gentile city of the Greeks.
- So they spoke to the women there.

V: 14-15 Paul was forbidden to go to Thyatira which is in Asia, but the Holy Spirit brought him a woman from Thyatira, Lydia, a merchant woman, who sold purple cloth, which in that day was an expensive luxury item. This is one way of describing that she was probably fairly well off.

- Lydia was a God seeker, a God worshipper, who’s heart the Lord had opened to receive Him. Given she was named after the province of Lydia, she was probably a Gentile convert to Judaism, a Jewish proselyte who came to faith.

John 6:44 “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

- She listened to the things Paul spoke as he shared the Gospel, she believed and was baptized into her new faith, along with her household.

Matthew 5:6 “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

Jeremiah 29:13 “And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.”

- Lydia immediately begins to exercise the gift of hospitality, rather forcefully it would appear, made it pretty hard to say “no.” Paul was traveling with Silas, Timothy, and Luke, and there may have been others. She must have had a good sized house.
- That’s the beginning of the church in Europe, the beginning of the church in Philippi, humble, small beginnings.

Zechariah 4:10 “For who hath despised the day of small things?...”

V: 16-18 While on the way to prayer - in accordance with the Jewish traditions, they’re headed to prayer, no doubt also to witness to the Jews.

- They came across a woman with the spirit of divination, the Greek word used here is pythos - the root word for python.
- The city of Delphi in Greece, there were the oracles of Delphi. This according to Greek mythology is where Apollos killed a great snake called Python. The snake’s spirit was said to have remained there and would inhabit the prophets and of Delphi.
- People would come from far and wide to receive guidance and so on from “Python” as he would speak through these channelers who would speak in a strange voice. These channelers or oracles were probably demon possessed which is how they could speak about things that they could not otherwise have known.
- Such was the state of this particular slave girl. Because of this she made good money for her masters.
- This soothsayer spoke the truth: She accurately described Paul and his company, they were indeed servants of the Most High God, they were preaching the Gospel, the way to salvation.
- ¹⁸Paul was grieved because he knew that the Jews would immediately discount their message if it were to be preceded by this woman’s proclamation knowing that she was demon possessed, and that by association they would put Paul and company in the same category - demon possessed.

- At one point the Jews accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of the Devil, but Jesus pointed out the fallacy of that accusation.

Matthew 12:25-26 “²⁵And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: ²⁶And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?”

- Paul addressed the demon, not the woman. He knew that she was possessed, controlled by this demonic spirit.
- Paul did not invoke his authority as an Apostle, he invoked the authority of Jesus Christ.
- He “commanded” - confidently.
- Invoking the power of the Savior against the power of the “Destroyer” (Apollyon) - Jesus is God, He already has the victory over this created being and Paul is walking in that victory.

1 John 4:4 “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

- The weakest child of God is stronger than any of Satan’s demons when that child comes against them in the name of Jesus.
- The demonic spirit had no choice but to obey, and in that same hour the girl was delivered.
- This answers the question, would God use ungodly means to further His kingdom? I think the answer is no.
- The church doesn’t need to be advertised by that which is contrary to the message of Jesus Christ.
- The Christian community, the church is becoming increasingly weakened because of those kinds of compromises.
- Many churches are using “marketing” schemes and “church growth” programs to “grow” the church numerically, but it’s a failure spiritually.

2 Corinthians 6:14 “¹⁴Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will

dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹⁷Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

- We can't ignore this, or any part of God's word and at the same time expect God's blessings.

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- Paul and Barnabas were preaching the Gospel there in Philippi when a demon possessed slave woman, a soothsayer began to proclaim that Paul and Silas, were men of God, preaching the way of salvation.
 - At one point Paul, being both grieved and prompted by the Spirit confronted the woman, actually he commanded the demonic spirit in the name of Jesus to come out of her, which he did.
 - At that point the woman was no longer able to make money for her masters as a soothsayer, and they weren't too happy about that, which is where we pick it up.

V: 19-21 When the girl's masters saw that the demon was gone and that she had lost her powers of divination, they were upset.

- This is a sad picture of avarice and greed, they didn't care about the girl, just about their profits. The same is true of the pornography industry today.
- The owners of the woman grabbed Paul & Silas and brought them to the officials, to the judges, or authorities. In Greek cities, the courts were often located in the center of the marketplace.
- Imagine anyone today taking you to court, suing you because you cast demons out of someone. The case being "I want my demons back..."
- As they make their case part of their claim is that Paul & Silas are Jews - anti-semitism; a well used tool of the enemy.

“They teach customs, which are not lawful to receive...”

- Foolish statement. The Bible teaches us the way of love, to pray for your enemies, to not cheat on your wife, or your taxes, how to be right with God and how to go to heaven - grievous things indeed! (Anti-proselytization laws)
- This may be a reference to Caesar worship; whereas Christianity would reject Caesar worship in favor of worshipping the True and Living God, Jesus Christ.

- It impacted their profit margin, that is what they were upset about!

Testimony: Murrieta Hot Springs transitioned into conference center & Bible College: 3 bars went out of business - so they sued Calvary Chapel. (and lost!)

- Being Romans: Colony = Roman citizens. Being particularly pagan...

V: 22-24 It's gone from the woman's masters, one or two, or three men, now to a multitude / mob.

- They tore off Paul and Silas' clothes and proceeded to beat them. This has more the sense of a controlled public beating, akin to a scourging as opposed to being beaten up by the mob itself, like a gang beating.
- When they had laid many stripes on them, not limited to 40 minus one. They weren't satisfied so they cast them into prison.
- They commanded the jailer to keep them secure. Seeing what had ensued the jailer was determined not to fail so he put them in the most secure part of the prison, and just to be sure he fastened their feet in stocks.



V: 25-26 Paul & Silas have been beaten and tossed in jail for preaching the Gospel, laid up in stocks which wasn't comfortable, along with the injuries they suffered from the beating - and we find them praying and sing praises unto God!

Job 13:15 "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him..."

- When you can't sleep, perhaps the Lord is calling you to prayer or to worship.

Psalm 42:8 "Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the day time, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the god of my life."

- Worship is a great way to get out of the dumps, our focus changes, is re-directed to the Lord, and that's always good!

"²⁵... *and the prisoners heard them.*" The words used here don't just describe them as having "overheard" them, like they were in the next cell and couldn't help but here, this describes that they listened attentively to them.

- The other prisoners had to be wondering how Paul & Silas having been beaten and imprisoned, suffering through all of this could now be worshipping their God and praising Him.

- Paul and Silas were a good witness of Jesus Christ, they were demonstrating what it is to be more than conquerors!

Romans 8:35-39 “³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. ³⁷Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. ³⁸For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- Suddenly there was a great earthquake: must have been some powerful prayers!
- The foundations were shaken, the doors were opened, and everyone’s bands were loosed, meaning the chains and restraints fell off.

Jesus said:

Matthew 16:18 “I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

- We’re not sure exactly what Paul was praying but the end result is that the prison doors were opened, they were released from their bondage, and we see that they were saved.
- This is the third jail break in Acts thus far, and each time it’s been different, the only common denominator is prayer and the freedom for God’s servants.
- **Acts 5** The Apostles had been preaching, and teaching, and doing miraculous healings, and signs, and wonders. So they got arrested and put in jail.

Acts 5:19-20 “¹⁹But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, ²⁰go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.”

- When the high priest went looking for them, they found the doors locked, guards at their stations - but no prisoners, then someone came and said hey, they’re in the Temple teaching...
- **Acts 12** Herod imprisoned Peter, and as he was sleeping between two soldiers, an angel woke him up, the chains fell off, the door opened by itself, and the angel escorted him out of prison.

Just prior to that we read:

Acts 12:5 “Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”

- God likes to set free that which men imprison...

V: 27 The warden saw what had happened with the doors standing open was going to kill himself, figuring that the prisoners had escaped.

- Roman law: if you were guarding a prisoner and they escaped, then the guard was to receive whatever that prisoner's sentence was. It would appear that someone in that prison had been sentenced to death, and the guard was going to beat them to the punch.
- He knew that according to Roman law that he was a condemned man, he had suddenly come to the end.

V: 28-33 Paul knew what the guard was about to do and cried out to stop him, then informed him of the second miracle - that all the prisoners were still there and accounted for.

- Why didn't the other men in the prison flee? The Lord, they were in some way drawn to the Lord and to what He was doing.
- The warden came in with a light to see for himself and fell down at Paul and Silas' feet (which were still in stocks...)
- The jailer bringing them out asked Paul that question that we just love to be asked:
- What must I do to be saved? This guard was suddenly brought to the place of seeing his own need.
- Notice that Paul's answer was very simple, not complicated or demanding per se.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Later Paul would write:

Romans 10:9 “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

- Not talking about an intellectual belief that there is a God, or that Jesus was a great teacher; it's trusting Him, truly putting your faith in Him - which then leads to action.

“... *and thy house.*” Christianity is contagious... but it's not by proxy. “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your whole house also, if they too believe.*” We see in the next couple of verses that they did.

- Paul and Silas didn't stop there, they kept preaching and teaching, speaking the Word of God to all that were in his house.
- When Paul and Silas were first delivered to him, he just put them in stocks, he didn't care about their wounds. Now he's a different man, different attitude, now he's ministering to them - further evidence of salvation.

John 13:35 “*By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.*”

- Things are completely reversed: First the jailer fell at Paul's feet, then he's asking questions about how to get saved, now he's washing their wounds, feeding them, exercising the gift of hospitality, and taking care of them - then he get's baptized!
- Baptism is an outward sign of an inward change, there's been a lot of change in short order.

Three reasons to be baptized:

1. Obedience to Jesus.
2. Public profession of faith.
3. Identifying with Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection.

1 Peter 3:21b (describing baptism) “*baptism, not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*”

V: 34 The jailer then brought them into his home and fed them, they rejoiced, celebrating the new life they'd entered into. He's gone from almost killing himself now to rejoicing. Joy is another indication of salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:17 “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*”

Romans 6:4 “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*”

- Paul & Silas would go through a lot to deliver a slave girl from demon possession, and a jailer and his family. They had probably wondered “why Lord?” But in the end it was all worth it.

V: 35-37 The next morning the magistrates / judges send the sergeants to release Paul and Silas, and send them on their way.

- Somebody must have figured out in the mean time that they really didn't have any valid charges against Paul & Silas.
- Paul's not having it - they aren't going to get away with this all that easy. The Holy Spirit through Paul turns the tables once again, he informs them that what they've done is contrary to Roman law and now they're in jeopardy.
- Paul is a Roman citizen, they've been condemned, beaten, and imprisoned without a fair trial.
- He says we're not going away quietly, you come and escort us out yourselves - forcing them to publicly admit that they were wrong.
- This is not Paul just one upping the magistrates, this is Paul protecting the church. If Paul had left quietly the church would have lived under the dark cloud of suspicion and doubt - but being exonerated also reflected on the church and Paul's witness.

V: 38-39 When the magistrates figured out what was up they rightly figured that humility was the best solution.

V: 40 Paul took his time leaving, first he stayed with Lydia so as to encourage the new believers, then he departed.

- Thus far in Philippi the only converts had been Lydia and her household. Who were the brethren that he comforted?
- There may have been male servants in Lydia's house, but I'm thinking Paul & Silas' former cell mates, the brethren from his most recent jail ministry who got saved!
- Luke had previously been using the pronoun "we" in describing these events but in V: 40 he switches back to "they" departed on towards Thessalonica.
- This may indicate that Timothy and Luke stayed behind in Philippi while Paul and Silas went on to Thessalonica.

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- This chapter starts off with disagreement between God's servants, whom He sends in different directions. Two teams instead of one.

- We see God's servant having to work through, press through different difficulties, and personal suffering in order to accomplish God's will.
- We see different people getting saved in different ways:
 1. Timothy comes to faith through the influence of his Godly grandmother Eunice.
 2. Lydia was converted through a quiet conversation following a prayer meeting.
 3. We don't know if the soothsaying slave girl actually got saved or not, but we do know that she was delivered and certainly had the opportunity for salvation. I'd like to think she got saved.
 4. Then we see the Philippian jailer. One minute he's a hardened jailer who doesn't really care about the prisoners under his charge, the next minute he's a child of God getting baptized and demonstrating practically that he's a new man.
 5. Then there's the "brethren," other's who watching all this go down, seeing that living testimony happen right in front of them who said "I too believe" and meant it in their hearts which led to their salvation.

Hebrews 12:1 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."