

- A Study in Acts -

Chapter Sixteen – Second Journey of Paul

ACTS 16:25-40:

We began this journey with Paul and Silas in **Antioch of Syria**; they then traveled through the rest of **Syria** and through the region of **Cilicia** strengthening **the Bodies of Christ** along the way. When they had come to the area of the two cities of **Lystra and Derbe**, they will pick up young Timothy to travel with them. They delivered the decrees to these cities which strengthened them to a productive unity. From here they will travel to two new areas of Asia Minor: **Phrygia and Galatia**. Luke does not record anything about these visits and Paul will not return to these regions until **Chapter 19**.

Passing through the region of Mysia (having been forbidden by the Spirit of God to go into Asia and Bithynia at this time), Paul and his group have come to **Troas**. Here at Troas, Paul will have a vision encouraging him to go to Macedonia and bring the Gospel. As they determine to go to Macedonia, we learn that Luke joins them.

They set out across the Aegean Sea and cross with relative ease, stopping at the island of **Samothrace**, and the next day arriving at **Neapolis**, the seaport town for Philippi. From Neapolis they head straight to **Philippi**, the chief city of this region.



**Note:** Before we begin to look into the work of Paul here in Philippi, I would like to share with you, from his own words, some things to consider as we look at the events in Philippi, note:

**Philippians 4:8-9** “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. <sup>9</sup> The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

As Paul writes back to the Christians established by the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ here in Philippi, he reminds them of all the properties necessary to learn, and states that they have witnessed all of them in his actions among them. We will in the next lessons begin to look at three examples of these events to be noticed and recalled by these brethren and you and me.

#### **Text #1:**

**Acts 16:25-26** “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup> Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were loosed.”

In the previous lesson, we witnessed that Paul always produced good works, even in the face of adversity. In this lesson, he will now demonstrate that he never allows an opportunity to promote Jesus as the Christ to pass.

Remember the beating that we described in the previous lesson, and now consider that you and I would probably be sitting in a puddle of our own pity concerning our condition. Here however, Paul practices what he will later preach, note:

**Philippians 4:6-7** “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup> and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Apart from the wisdom and peace that is provided through Jesus Christ, these events would absolutely be beyond our understanding; this is witnessed by the prisoners who are listening with obvious amazement to Paul and Silas.

**Earthquake:** Somewhere during the midnight hour an earthquake shook the foundations of the prison. Earthquakes are not uncommon for this part of the world; however, they are as any of us who have ever lived in California can tell you, an earthquake that can open locked doors and loose chains is not normal. It is obviously a miraculous event.

## Text #2:

**Acts 16:27-34** “And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. <sup>28</sup> But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.”

<sup>29</sup> Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

<sup>31</sup> So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” <sup>32</sup> Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup> And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his *family* were baptized. <sup>34</sup> Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.”

**Keeper of the Prison:** He is often referred to as the ‘jailor’; however, we notice that Luke wants us to understand that he is a man of rank. Some historians believe him to have been a retired centurion, this is predicated on Philippi and its history of retired military men. Others think he was an active centurion. In either case, he is obviously the one to whom the responsibility had been given to secure the prison.

Awakened by the earthquake and coming to the prison and seeing the doors opened, he feared the worst. Being overcome by the supposed loss of his charge, as a Roman of honor, he was in the process readying to kill himself rather than face the disgrace of failure when Paul stopped him.

**We Are All Here:** It is the casual reader that overlooks the fact that not only did Paul and Silas remain within the prison, but all the other prisoners who had heard them pray and sing. The effect of Paul and Silas and their trust in God is obviously a powerful tool in the rest of these criminals remaining incarcerated.

Many speculate that the keeper of the prison may have heard some of the preaching of Paul as the motive for the question asked; however, we must take into consideration the facts as Luke has presented them. The keeper of the prison has recognized that only a power greater than mere men could be at work in these events and it is this that prompts him to ask, “**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**”

**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ:** There are many, who for whatever reason ignore the facts of these events in order to instruct a doctrine that seems rather strange to any individual reading this with any intellectual integrity.

**First,** the pronouncement of the power behind the events that have just transpired and the power to the question the keeper of the prison has asked, would mean nothing to him if this is all that is given to this point.

**Second**, it is obvious that it was necessary for them to explain whom the Lord Jesus Christ was (Vs. 32).

**Third**, if the salvation that the keeper of the prison and now all his household who are able to comprehend the preaching of Paul and Silas, had taken place by just a thought or mental ascent, why didn't they wait till the next day to be baptized? You see, this is the same fact that we have seen play out from the beginning of this study to the present; baptism is a command for believers for the forgiveness of sins, and to be added to the Lord (Acts 2:38, 47; Galatians 3:26-29). It was in fact, that same hour that they demonstrated penitence (a godly sorrow leading to repentance) and also demonstrated that the preaching of Jesus as the Christ is not complete unless the teaching of baptism is associated with it (the same way we witnessed it in Acts 8:36-39).

**Fourth**, when did they rejoice? Before baptism or after? Vs. 34 demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that soul saving belief is demonstrated in obedience to the commands of Jesus the Christ (being the Grace of God, everything He demands of us is the grace of God!). This is using this understanding in what translators refer to as the Greek perfect tense. That is everything included in the instructions of Paul and Silas represent the complete saved believer (He heard, he believed, he was repentant, and was submissively obediently baptized, and then rejoiced in completion of the newly established relationship).

**Text #3:**

Acts 16:35-40 “And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, “Let those men go.”<sup>36</sup> So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace.”<sup>37</sup> But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us openly, un-condemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.”<sup>38</sup> And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.<sup>39</sup> Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city.<sup>40</sup> So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.”

**First**, if Paul had left that night after the conversion of the keeper of the prison and his household (only those who could comprehend the full extent of the words conveyed – not babies), the keeper of the prison could have lost his life for letting them escape.

**Second**, the order to release is most naturally accounted for by the fact that, as the scourging and imprisonment had been inflicted only to silence the clamor of the mob, there was now no need to protract the imprisonment.

**Third**, Paul's demand for the magistrates to come and get them out themselves is obvious; if news of the fact of his having been scourged and imprisoned should follow him to other cities, there would also follow the fact that the rulers by whose order it was done must have made amends for it. It was in fact a crime to scourge a Roman citizen without trial. This is emphasized

by Luke when he records their fear at finding out that Paul is Roman. This would now be the word that would travel with Paul, and other magistrates would be far more hesitant to charge and punish without due process.

Saying their farewells to Lydia and the brethren, they will now take their leave of Philippi.

**Next: “On to Thessalonica!”**