



27 | ACTS 16:16-40

JAIL HOUSE CHURCH PLANT

God is glorified in our weakness. The weaker we are, the greater his power is displayed in and through us.

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He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. ²I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." —Psalm 91:1-2

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All I Have is Christ
Praise to the Lord the Almighty
My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone
Yet Not I But Christ in Me

Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

GIVING: You can give over Zelle through your bank with no fees (use secretary@livinghopechurch.net). We also have a collection box on the Welcome Center. Malachi 3, “Test me in this” Proverbs: **“Give of your firstfruits.”** We believe blessing comes by putting God first.

Introduction

As a child, my wife was very much into aviation. She still has books all about planes and jets. She knows a lot about planes. She told me that **you can really feel powerless in an airplane when an engine stalls.** You feel like you want to climb higher, but actually what you have to do in that moment of powerlessness when your engine has failed is you have to plunge downward. That’s counterintuitive. It’s frightening. It feels like you are going to crash. But what happens when you get low with your plane is it catches the wind that reboots the engine. That’s how God works. When we feel powerless and low, the wind of the Spirit is able to lift us up to heights unimaginable.

Imagine the apostle Paul as he’s had a vision of the first church plant in Europe. God tells him and his team to go! They obey. And bam! They’re in jail. How do you plant a church when you are in jail? That’s an interesting question that we are going to answer in our passage where we learn of Paul and Silas in jail, planting the church of the Philippians. Philippi is the first church plant of Europe. It’s Paul’s second missionary journey. Remember his first missionary journey is to Galatia primarily. His second is to Eastern Europe. **The first church that is planted by the new missionary team is in Philippi. Their initial headquarters is a jail cell.**

Key Thought: God is glorified in our weakness. The weaker we are, the greater his power is displayed in and through us.

1. THE PEOPLE GOD SAVES (16:12-24)

In the Jewish Mishnah (collection of Jewish history and traditions) it is said that a Jewish man would thank God daily for three things: that he was not a woman, a slave, or a Gentile. That’s interesting because that was the founding group for the Philippian church.

LYDIA THE FASHIONISTA

If we look to Acts 16, Lydia we find is from Thyatira, but has a home in Philippi. She’s a rich woman. She has a booming business in selling purple fabric for clothing. A “seller of purple” (Acts 16:14) meant Lydia sold purple clothes or cloth. **At the time, such clothes were so expensive they were only worn by royalty and the rich.** Let’s read about her. They came to a city, it says in Acts 16:12, named...

Acts 16:12-15 | Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Thyatira and Philippi are cities with booming economies. Lydia then is basically a Greek fashionista, CEO, on top of some fashion empire. Today we might say she has a house in Chicago and in Paris. She's a serious mover in her world. Isn't it wonderful that God can humble someone like Lydia? She's what the Bible calls a "God-fearer." Here's what that means. She's rejected paganism and polytheism. She does not believe that there are dozens of gods: god of the wind, the rain, the purple cloth; god of the sea, god of the fashion world... She's come to believe there is only one God ruling the universe. So a God-fearer is that she is a monotheist. She's in the synagogue. She's listening to the teaching of the Jews. She's trying to live a moral life. I want you to see how God goes after her. She is an intellect. She is a seeker. She understands the law, and she knows the Torah. She knows she needs forgiveness. She knows she needs a blood sacrifice. She needs atonement. She needs to be justified before God. But she's confused.

Enter Paul. He enters into what is basically a women's Bible study and pauses the Nancy Leigh DeMoss app and begins to teach them. Paul basically connects the dots for them. God opens her eyes. Lydia is a thinker. She's an intellect. She's a God-fearer. She is listening to the word of God, and she experiences the wisdom of God when God opens her eyes. After her conversion, she "constrained" the missionaries to use this house as a base of operations, so it must have been much larger than needed. Her home in Philippi became the place where the new church met (16:40).

THE SLAVE GIRL

Here in Acts 16, we are also introduced to a slave girl. She's manic. She's mental. She's possessed by a demon. She's making tons of money for her handlers. She's following Paul and Silas and Luke around, causing trouble. She's interrupting and screaming speaking of Paul and his Savior Jesus. That sounds good, but it's not. She's screaming and causing a scene for them. This is an evil spirit that has her tongue. Let's read about her.

Acts 16:16-18 | As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." ¹⁸ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

Here we have one of many “we” passages in the book of Acts. Luke says, “we” went to “the place of prayer.” Silas and Paul—Timothy and Luke—**all went to the synagogue.** Suddenly the author of the book includes himself in the narrative; he is no longer just a recorder of what was taking place but is himself one who participates. Luke enters into the entourage at this point.

The slave girl had the spirit of divination. That is, she was involved in sorcery and fortune-telling. She was so good at it that **she made them a lot of money.** Anytime you see this, understand this is driven by demons. She’s not merely a huckster, but she is dealing with the demonic, giving shockingly accurate predictions of the future, and **this slave girl would sell her predictions.**¹

So popular was this slave girl would have been consulted by statesmen and ambassadors alike. Controlled by whatever strange force of evil, she was in much demand by men and women wanting to peer into the future.²

It’s interesting how the Scripture says that Paul was “greatly annoyed” (16:18). He had a **holy annoyance.** Don’t misunderstand. **Paul is a man filled with the Holy Spirit.** He knows what this girl needs. He is annoyed that **this girl is under the power of the wicked one.** She needs to experience the power of the gospel not merely through wisdom, which she knew and had been spouting off about. Mere knowledge was not enough to convert this girl. **She needed to experience Christ as the power of God.** So, Paul commands the demon to come out of her. There’s an implication in the text that the gospel is being preached. This girl was beyond just assessing the facts of the gospel. She was demonized. Preaching the gospel is the greatest way to relieve the lost of demonization and demon harassment. **There’s convert number two.** The slave girl is converted through the power of God, just like Lydia.

This conversion eventually causes a riot, because the gospel has major economic consequences for the city of Philippi. Even though **Paul is a Roman citizen, he is thrown into prison with Silas.** It seems **Luke and Timothy** are in Philippi, but they are not arrested.

Acts 16:19-22 | But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.²⁰ And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, “These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city.²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.”²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods.

Now it looks like their ministry in Philippi was over. This is about the time that we would write home and let everyone know that we are done with missionary work. We are done with ministry. I mean we can only take so much, right? No, it is here that God says, now that you are in chains Paul and Silas, now that you can do nothing, I’m going to really build this church in Philippi. You see that jailer? He’s convert number 3.

¹ R. C. Sproul, *Acts*, St. Andrew’s Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 294.

² Pollock, *The Apostle*, 127.

THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER

Acts 16:23-24 | And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

So here we have an introduction to our ex-Roman military Philippian jailer. He's likely a GI, a Roman soldier that is now a warden. He's a tough guy. We know that because he's supposed to keep Paul and Silas safe, but he tortures them.

Not only does he beat them, but he puts them in stocks. Now when we modern people think of stocks, we think of **the 1700s** when a person would have **their hands and their head restrained by stocks**. The Roman practice of stocks was not nearly as kind. Stocks in Roman practice was a form of torture in the prisoners would be **shackled to the wall in painful positions**.

This jailer is not just keeping them safe. He's torturing them. He's going above and beyond in making sure they never want to cause a problem in Philippi again. But something happens. The Philippian jailer comes to know the Lord. God delivers them, and the Philippians jailer and his whole family come to know the Lord.

2. THE POWER OF GOD IN SALVATION (16:19-34)

Let's slow down for a moment and look at all this in slow motion. I want us to see how and when God works salvation here. He saves the Philippian jailer when Paul and Silas are chained up. Paul and Silas are absolutely powerless. This is when God does his most glorious work!

POWER DESPITE PERSECUTION

When we have our church planting classes in Seminary, there is not usually a section on persecution. Usually, you need a good location and a lot of good advertisement. Paul and Silas had none of these advantages. Instead, their second convert in Philippi, the slave girl, caused them to be arrested, since **the girl's owners had lost a major source of income** when she came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. In turn, they took their anger out on Paul and Silas. They charged them with **disrupting the peace**.

Acts 16:19-24 | But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰ And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

After “many blows” had been inflicted on them, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison where their feet were secured in stocks. Roman stocks had several holes so that, if desired, the legs could be widely separated, adding to the torture. These were “a horrible instrument,” explains Gustav Stählin, “in which the prisoners’ legs could be divaricated as widely as desired, in such a way as to prevent sleeping.”³

Philippi was an excruciating trial for Paul. We look at him as if he’s superhuman. Paul has the same nerve endings as you do. It was hard! He writes about these difficulties later to the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 | For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. ² But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.

Not only were such floggings dreadful punishments, pushing human endurance to the limit but, in the case of Paul and Silas, they were also **against the law** in their case. Why? Roman laws established that **no Roman citizen could be beaten**. Both Paul and Silas had Roman citizenship.

The torture and beatings he endured at Philippi were hard for Paul, but it didn’t stop him. You see persecution doesn’t hold back the power of God. God’s power was seen in Paul’s boldness to the Philippians.

So, in the middle of the night, prevented from sleeping because of the painful stocks, and their backs no doubt covered with painful wounds, **Paul and Silas began praying and singing hymns to God.**

THE POWER OF PRAISE

Notice they did not give up. They were **not trusting in human acumen and their well laid plans to convert the Philippian people. God could do just as much work or more when they were imprisoned and tortured as when they were free.**

Paul and Silas were not complaining and fussing about all they had to endure for the Lord’s work. They counted it a privilege to suffer for Christ. They were so honored, they began singing. And this is when God’s most glorious work is done!

Acts 16:25-26 | About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ and 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 bonds were unfastened.

This is what we call revival! Their singing causes a natural disaster that breaks everyone free. When you are in pain, the midnight hour is not the easiest time for a sacred concert, but God gives “songs in the night” (Job 35:10; cf Psa 42:8).⁴ Notice **the other prisoners were listening** to them pray and praise God (16:25). Most importantly, **God was listening**, and he sends an earthquake to shake the foundations of the prison, so much so that all the doors of the prison were opened!

³ Gustav Stählin, ed. Otto Böcher and Klaus Haacker. “Haustafel” in *Verborum Veritas: Festschrift for Gustav Stählin's 70th Birthday* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1970), 239-240.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 468.

Saints, if this teaches us nothing else, there is **power in praise**. No matter what your situation, you can praise the Lord. If you are hurting and in pain, praise the Lord. We have something that no one else has. We have a God that works all things together for our good to those who love him! Praise him! Love him! **See the walls come down!**

When we are powerless, that's when God comes in and saves the day. When we are powerless, he works his greatest wonders. When we have no strength or ability to change our situation, he comes and changes our hearts. That's our great God!

THE POWER OF PROVIDENCE

The earthquake of praise brings a wonderful gospel preaching opportunity to Paul and Silas. As we are faithful, God will put people in his providential circumstances, so that they see their need for Christ. If you are faithful, he will send them to you! Here comes the jailer, ready to kill himself, and Paul is given an opportunity to preach the gospel.

Acts 16:27-28 | When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

Prayer and praise are powerful weapons (2 Chron 20:1–22; Acts 4:23–37). God responds by shaking the foundations of the prison, opening all the doors, and loosening the prisoners' chains. Jesus is the ultimate chain breaker! The prisoners could have fled to freedom, but instead they remained right where they were. For one thing, **Paul immediately took command**; and, no doubt, the fear of God was on these pagan men. The prisoners must have realized that there was something very special about those two Jewish preachers!

Paul's attention was fixed on the jailer, the man he really wanted to win to Christ. It was a **Roman law that if a guard lost a prisoner, he was given the same punishment the prisoner would have received**; so there must have been some men in the prison who had committed capital crimes. The jailer would rather commit suicide than face shame and execution. Paul had been in stocks and imprisoned, but now he was free. Truly, it was the jailer who was the prisoner, not Paul; and Paul not only saved the man's life but pointed him to eternal life in Christ.⁵

The man was by now thoroughly under conviction. He had been brought into contact with a quality of life superior to anything he had known. The jailer's first reaction was to bring Paul and Barnabas out where he could get a better look at them. His second reaction was to ask them how he could be saved. **A sense of his own personal sinfulness weighed upon him.**⁶

THE POWER OF PREACHING

No doubt having first made sure the other prisoners were secure, the jailer brought Paul and Silas out into the courtyard. There he asked the question that was burning in his heart.⁷

⁵ Wiersbe, *ibid.*

⁶ John Phillips, *Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Ac 16:30–31.

⁷ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Acts*, vol. 2, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 108.

Acts 16:29-30 | And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

When people see the power of God on display in your life, they will respond with the beautiful question, “**What must I do to be saved?**” (16:30). When that question is asked, **you had better have the right answer**. Paul and Silas definitely had the right answer!

The Preaching of Faith

Acts 16:31 | And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Do? Why all the doing has been done. Done by Jesus in his immaculate life and atoning death. “Believe!” That was the word now. Stop doing and start trusting! Hallelujah, salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone! “Believe in the Lord Jesus.” What does that mean? It means to trust him. *Believe*: not in a creed but in the Christ, not in a statement of faith, not in baptism, not in good works, not in a ritual—but believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, in that glorious living, dynamic person who is alive for evermore and is mighty to save. He’s the **Lord**: he’s our Master, the Lord God Almighty. His name is **Jesus**: he became man. He went from the highest position to the lowest, born in a manger as an infant in Bethlehem. He is the **Christ**: that is, he is the Messiah—the King of kings and Lord of lords. Believe and trust in his lordship and guidance over your entire life. He calls you to come to him, and he will be your God and you will be his child.

What about the other prisoners? Luke doesn’t give us the details, but it is possible that some of them were also born again through the witness of Paul and Silas and the jailer. Some of these prisoners may have been waiting for execution, so imagine their joy at hearing a message of salvation!⁸

The Preaching to Family

Acts 16:31-32 | And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

Luke records that Paul’s words were **not just for the Philippian jailer, but for his entire household**: his wife, his children, and his servants. Sometimes this is a passage that dear brothers will use to teach infant baptism, that we should baptize our children. Now all Christians believe we should dedicate our children and that children born in believing families have a much greater responsibility to believe, since they are born and raised in the light. But notice the command here is not to baptize, but to believe first, and then there would be salvation.

The emphasis here is found verse 32, that Paul and Silas “**spoke the word of the Lord**” to the whole family. We don’t baptize anyone until they have a sound understanding of salvation. They must entrust their lives to Christ as Lord and Savior first, and then be baptized.

⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 469.

The weight of this passage has to do with believing. We have hope if our children have faith in Christ. The gospel is not just for fathers and mothers, but for children and all we come into contact with. The greatest missionaries in the world are missionary mom and dad.

THE POWER OF PROVISION

Now that they believed, they showed immediate fruit.

The Provision of Relationship

Acts 16:33a | And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds.

It is touching to see the radical change in the attitude of the jailer as he washed the wounds of these two prisoners who were now his brothers in Christ. The walls of hostility come down when we come in faith to Christ.

The Provision of Membership

Acts 16:33b | And he was baptized at once, he and all his family.

What a joy that with baptism they are added to the new church at Philippi. We later find out that they will be meeting in Lydia's living room for church. When they believed they realized that they were members of God's forever family. They wanted to go public with their faith in Jesus Christ. So they went and found a baptistry. It wouldn't have been hard.

You may ask, where would they have been baptized? Remember earlier Paul and his missionary team had gone to the "place of prayer," that is, the synagogue. Outside of most synagogues would be a **mikveh, or what we would call a baptistry.** A mikveh would have "living" or running water coming from a spring below. There were usually a number of mikvehs outside of each synagogue. Even today, if you visit an ancient synagogue or even the Temple itself in Jerusalem, there are mikvehs with running water from natural springs below. When I visited the synagogue at Magdala in Galilee they found dozens of mikvehs which had been buried for almost 2000 years from a mudslide that occurred in A.D. 70. When they uncovered them, because they are connected to underground springs, they started running again. In fact, they are still running to this very day. We don't know exactly where Lydia would have been baptized, but it could have been a mikveh. Another place would be the rivers that ran around Philippi (Strymon and Nestos Rivers). Today there is a memorial site near a river attributed to Lydia's baptism, though we cannot be sure.

So they went over and baptized the whole family, the Philippian jailer and his wife, the kids, and the servants. They all put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Wow!

The Provision of Discipleship

Acts 16:34 | Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

Then they went back to the jailer's home, surely a very nice home as a retired Roman soldier, and they had a nice meal, all rejoicing that the Philippian jailer had the courage to put his faith in Christ and lead his whole family to Jesus Christ.

Discipleship begins immediately with fellowship. They start praising God and edifying each other. The home is the best place for discipleship.

3. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN SALVATION (16:35-40)

Now that all of this has happened, how do you build the church of Philippi when you were already charged with disturbing the peace and the day before you had caused a riot in the city center of Philippi? What's going to happen? Remember no matter what is happening, God is in control. We see his providence in every circumstance. **God is sovereignly guiding all things for his glory and your good.**

RULERS IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE

What happens with the rulers and magistrates that arrested Paul and Silas? It looks like, in God's providence, that night they had a change of heart, and in the morning, **they decide to drop all charges** against Paul and his missionary companion Silas.

Acts 16:35-36 | But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." ³⁶ And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace."

The city officials knew that they had no convincing case against Paul and Silas, so they sent word to the jailer to release them.

RIGHTS IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Not everyone was a Roman citizen, but Paul and Silas were. Not everyone is a U.S. citizen today, but you likely are. And so Paul and Silas used their rights as Roman citizens to protect the new fledgling church.

Acts 16:37-39 | But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out." ³⁸ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. ³⁹ So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city.

Paul was free to go, but he was unwilling to "sneak out of town," for that kind of exit would have left the new church under a cloud of suspicion. People would have asked, "Why did they leave so quickly? What do their followers believe?" Paul and his associates wanted to leave behind a strong witness of their own integrity as well as a good testimony for the infant church in Philippi. It was then that Paul made use of his Roman citizenship

and boldly challenged the officials on the legality of their treatment. This was not personal revenge but a desire to give protection and respect for the church.⁹

The only ones actually guilty of breaking the laws of the state are the people and authorities in Philippi. By law, a Roman citizen had a right to trial before being condemned. Here we see Paul acting according to his views concerning civil government (*cf* Rom 13:1–7). He respects governing officials but also calls them to perform their God-given responsibility of doing what is right for those under their rule, reserving punishment for only those who do wrong (Rom 13:4).

Upon hearing of their mistake, the magistrates come personally—as demanded by Paul—to let the prisoners go. They offer apologies and ask them kindly to leave Philippi. Paul declines to take his rights a step further and see the magistrates punished for their injustice to him and Silas.¹⁰ Paul uses his rights as a Roman citizen to protect the church.

We are called to honor our authorities, but we are also called to hold them accountable as citizens of the land. There is a separation of church and state. We, as Christ's church, are called in civil matters to submit to government as long as it does not violate God's law, but when it comes to our worship, the state has no authority over the church. **The church is the realm where Jesus Christ is our King. There is no competition with his rule.**

RESTING IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE

All the terrible persecution in Philippi only served to expand the church. Before leaving town, Paul visited his new beloved forever family there in Philippi.

Acts 16:40 | So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

What a ragtag group: Lydia, the slave girl, and the Philippian jailer and his family. Maybe there were some of the other former prisoners as well. It's not a large church, but we see that they are meeting at Lydia's home. They had to learn what we all must learn. We cannot rest in our circumstances, but we can rest in Christ.

Conclusion

What can we say about this new church plant in Europe? **It was all God's doing.** The **more things went wrong, the more they went right!** God sits in the heavens and laughs at man's attempt to stop the gospel from going forth. When they beat Paul and Silas, they sing. When they are imprisoned, God sends an earthquake and opens the door. When they have no power to bring the gospel to anyone since they are chained and shackled, God sets them free and adds the jailer of the prison to the member roll of the saints and gives him and his whole family a new heart and life in Christ. The more things go wrong, the more God works. God's power is perfected in our weakness!

My first car was a 1989 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme. It was a diesel. I didn't own it very long. I knew the engine was gone when nothing, but pure white smoke was coming out of the tailpipe. It was dead. Good for nothing. A friend of mine bought the car from me for a few hundred bucks. In a few weeks he had put a new engine in it, and it ran like new. Regeneration is like that new engine. I know nothing about putting in a new engine, but my mechanic friend did. God is the great mechanic. When we were dead,

⁹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 469.

¹⁰ James M. Hamilton Jr. and Brian J. Vickers, *John–Acts*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, vol. IX, *ESV Expository Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 496.

but God put new life into us! God is the great mechanic. When we can do nothing, God can do it all.

God's the only one that can take the dead and make dead sinners alive. **We can be bound in a prison like Paul, or we can have all the bells and whistles of modern society.** We are **equally powerless** to bring about the work of God. God has to do it. All we can do is be ready and surrendered. If you are weak and sense your inability to do anything for the Lord, you are in a good place. The more weak we are, the more obvious God's power is. Rest in him. Surrender to him, and he will lift you up as his instrument.