

Part 42 Lydia and the Philippian Jail

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, July 06, 2016

† Acts 16:11-40

Last week we looked at the first 10 verses of Acts 16 and covered the introduction to Timothy, Paul's time in Troas, and then the call to come to Macedonia.

One observation that I didn't mention when we covered verse 10 was the difference in Luke's writing. He switches from writing the narrative in third person to suddenly writing in first person. **Acts 16:10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.**

Before this Luke was saying, "he," and "they." But now it is "we," and "us." Because of this we can be assured that Luke is writing with first-hand knowledge and not relying on someone else's account.

So we pick up tonight with Paul and his missionary team traveling to Philippi which is the chief city of Macedonia.

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

Paul and his team boarded a ship in Troas and set sail toward Macedonia. Troas was in the area where we call Turkey today. Macedonia was across the Aegean Sea on the Southeast European continent in the country of Greece. So they first stop off on the Island of Samothracia and spend the night, then get up the next day and continue their journey to the mainland, arriving in the sea-port town of Neapolis which is about 10 miles from Philippi.

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

Of course they would want to go to the biggest cities in order to reach the most people so they are going to spend some time in Philippi which was a Roman Colony. The city was named after Philip II of Macedon who was the father of Alexander the Great.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

Since these women were meeting by the side of a river on the Sabbath, we can only assume there were no Jewish Synagogues in Philippi, otherwise Paul would have went there on the Sabbath. It was common in those days for the Jews to meet at certain places for prayer such as the side of a river when there was no Synagogue. To have a Synagogue required a certain number of Jews to be living in the vicinity and the rulers of the city had to give permission for them to erect a Synagogue. There must not have been that many Jews in this area.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Now we are introduced to a lady named Lydia. Her name most likely came from the region in which she was born, Lydia in Asia Minor. The Bible says she was of the City of Thyatira. Thyatira is located in Lydia.

"A seller of purple." Thyatira was known for producing a purple dye. The purple would be extracted from shellfish and then sold for a great price. Purple was a very expensive color and was worn by royalty and very rich people. Lydia was obviously a business woman making a living selling this purple dye.

"Which worshipped God." Since her name was a Greek name, it would mean that she is a Jewish proselyte and therefore worshiped God instead of the Greek gods that they would have worshiped where she was from.

"Whose heart the Lord opened" Here we see the Holy Spirit doing His work in the heart of Lydia. She hears what Paul has to say concerning the Gospel and she believed and placed her faith in Jesus to save her. She will go down in history as being the first European convert!

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

We see that after she was saved she followed the Lord's example of believer's baptism. It also says "and her household." So not only did Lydia get saved but so did the rest of the women or family members that were staying with her.

Then Lydia "constrained" Paul and his missionary team to stay at her house. She obviously wants to learn more about Jesus.

16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

We briefly covered this story about the demon possessed girl in part 40 of our study but we will go over it again.

It is hard to figure out how long of a time period it was between verses 15 and 16 but some time has passed and Paul and his men have obviously left from Lydia's house and are walking about Philippi.

"possessed with a spirit of divination." That word "divination" comes from the Greek word "Python." In Greek mythology Python was a huge serpent that had an oracle at Mount Parnassus. Python was known for predicting future events. The legend says that the Greek God Apollo slew Python and took his powers of prophecy. Anyone that foretold future events was said to have the spirit of Python.

This "damsel" was said to have that spirit of Python and could do some type of false prophesying.

"which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying" She was enslaved to these men who made their living off of her going around and predicting the future, much like a fortune teller.

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

It didn't take a rocket scientist or a fortune teller to know why Paul and his men were there. They had made it very plain why they were there but she is going in front of them everywhere they traveled announcing what they were doing. This seems very odd at first and you may wonder why someone with an evil spirit would announce these men of God and mention salvation. Almost as if she was endorsing them. But that is not what she is doing. This is nothing new. The Lord Jesus had to deal with evil

spirits as well. Remember the Demoniac of Gadara over in Mark 5. When Jesus came walking by him the Bible says: **Mark 5:7-8: And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. 8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.**

Didn't his words sound very much like what this demon possessed girl said concerning Paul and his men?

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

Paul put up with this girl for as long as he could. It said that she did this for many days and that it grieved Paul. So he commands that the evil spirit come out of this girl and it came out.

19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, 20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, 21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

Well if you want to get somebody riled up just start messing with their livelihood. These men could tell immediately that this girl no longer had an evil spirit in her and she would no longer be able to make any money for them. So they turn their anger on Paul and Silas and drag them out into the middle of the marketplace where the most people would have been. They bring them before the Roman magistrates. Magistrates were Roman soldiers and they kept the city in order and enforced the laws. The men falsely accuse Paul and Silas of unlawful acts of introducing false religions not sanctioned by the Roman Government.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. 23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

This turned into a lynch mob. Without even so much as asking Paul and Silas who they were they immediately stripped them of their clothes and began beating them.

"when they had laid many stripes upon them." The Jews were only allowed to give no more than 40 stripes. They usually only gave 39 as to not go over the lawful amount. But remember, these are not Jews they are dealing with here, they are Romans. The Romans did not have a 40-stripe law so they could beat people as many times as they wanted and probably did beat Paul and Silas more than 40 times. That may be what Paul is talking about in **2 Corinthians 11:23** when he said **"in stripes above measure."**

"they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: 24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

They really have it out for Paul and Silas. They even tell the jailer to throw them down into the inner prison. This would have been the deepest darkest bottom of the prison which was usually reserved for the worst of criminals. Not only in the inner prison but they even chained and locked their feet together so they couldn't run or walk.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

This has always been one of my very favorite passages of Scripture. I can just see Paul and Silas down there in that dark damp dungeon chained up, bleeding, aching, with open cuts on their backs yet they were praying, and singing praises unto God. Wow, I'm just going to be honest and say I don't know if I would react the same as Paul and Silas did. I would like to say that I would but I just don't know.

Paul and Silas sang so loud that all of the other prisoners heard them. With these two Christians in this prison there was the joyful sound of singing. This must have really caused a stir in that prison. That is the effect that Christians should have on this world. We should be lights in the darkness and joy in times of despair.

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 every one's bands were loosed.

The Lord heard their prayers and rewarded their faithfulness by causing an earthquake that was powerful enough to shake the doors off of their hinges. Not only did God cause an earthquake but he also loosed the bands from every prisoner. This would have no doubt made them realize the presence and power of God.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

The prison guard's house was nearby the prison. The earthquake no doubt woke him up and he immediately ran outside to see what was going on and saw that the prison doors were wide open. Of course he assumed that the prisoners had escaped.

Roman jailers were responsible for their prisoners and to lose one would be cause to have the jailer put to death. We saw this when Peter escaped from prison in Jerusalem and Herod had the jailers put to death: **Acts 12:19: And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.**

Suicide was common among the Romans and the Greeks. It was considered an acceptable thing to do when someone was facing execution or some danger he could not escape from. That's why you read about so many suicides in the history of Roman Emperors, leaders, and politicians. You may remember the Nero, Mark Antony, and Cleopatra all committed suicide as well as dozens of Roman Emperors. So for this Roman jailer to consider killing himself would only be natural for him to do.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

Paul can obviously see the jailer with his sword out and realizes what he is about to do and yells out to stop him. He informs him that none of the prisoners had escaped. This is a miracle in itself! How many prisoners do you know that would choose to stay in prison if they had the chance to escape?

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

The jailer cannot believe his ears and calls for someone to bring a light so he could see this miracle for himself. This would have been a torch or a lantern. He runs in the

prison and sees the truth and cannot believe his own eyes. He is immediately stuck with awe and wonder at the presence of God and falls down on his face in front of God's two men. He is not worshiping them, he is recognizing that they are instruments of God and he is trembling in their presence.

30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

I want you to understand something. The Philippian jailer was convicted of his sins but that didn't save him. He was probably remorseful for all he had done in his life and regretted it, but that didn't save him. He was fearful in the presence of God but that didn't save him. We know this for a fact because he asks Peter and Silas what he needed to do to be saved? He was convicted that he needed to be saved but he didn't know how to be.

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

Their immediate reply to his question was that he needed to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Some people want to stop right there and say that that was when the Philippian jailer was saved but that is not the case. He wasn't saved until Paul and Silas spoke to him at some length. There was much more said to him which Luke does not go into details about but simply says "they spake unto him the word of the Lord." This would of course cover everything he needed to know in order to trust Jesus as his Savior; acknowledging that Jesus died on the cross to save men from their sins. repentance of sin, and faith toward the Savior for salvation.

Not only did the jailer get saved but so did his entire family. As Paul and Silas preached they were convicted of their sins and trusted Jesus to save them.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

Their salvation was immediately followed up with believer's baptism. Here is further proof that baptism does not play a part in salvation, it is a follow up to salvation. How can we tell? Look at it: **And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes.** This once cruel Roman jailer was a changed man. He went from "thrusting" Paul and Silas into the inner prison and shackling their feet together, to washing their stripes. He didn't wash their stripes before. My friend this is a sign of a changed man. **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.**

Then, after he was saved and became that new man, he was baptized along with the rest of his family. What a great day that must have been for the jailers family.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. 36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

For whatever reason the decision was made by those in higher authority than the jailer, to set Paul and Silas free. No doubt word had gotten out about what had transpired at the prison and they must not have wanted to keep them there any longer. So the jailer gives Paul the good news and tells them they can go free. You would think everything would have been great at this point but no....

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

We must remember that while both Paul and Silas were Jews by birth, they also were both Roman citizens. That means that they had the same rights and laws as the Romans. It was against Roman laws for any citizen of Rome to be condemned without having a trial. It was also against the law for Roman citizens to be openly beat and humiliated as they were.

Apparently this public beating that Paul and Silas endured was a very painful and humiliating experience. He mentions it in his letter to the Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2: For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: 2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

Paul demands that the serjeants and magistrates come themselves and release them from the prison. They had openly and publicly beat them before so they needed to openly and publicly release them to show their innocence.

The reason that Paul did this was to help while they were in the Roman territories. If they had just left on their own without the public knowing what had happened then they would have been looked upon as criminals everywhere they went. This would have caused problems for them later on.

38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. 39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

When the serjeants and magistrates found out that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens a wave of fear went through them. They knew that if this got out to their bosses they were going to be in big trouble. The law said that if you were found guilty of unjustly punishing a Roman citizen that you were to die and all of your property was to be confiscated by Rome.

So they very nicely asked Paul and Silas to leave

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

They go back to Lydia's house and say their farewells then they visit other believers in Philippi then they depart to go to Thessalonica. We will pick up there in chapter 17 next Wednesday Lord willing.

†ⁱ All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible