

Where the gospel is proclaimed, God brings eternal deliverance to persons, families, churches, cities and cultures through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore rejoice in the spread of God’s kingdom and the all-encompassing deliverance He brings.

Introduction – Story of Charles Wesley’s quest for deliverance. This passage in Acts tells a story of the power of Christ bring deliverance from all forms of bondage (physical, emotional, spiritual) to both Christians and unbelievers. The subject of deliverance makes us feel good. But don’t get too comfortable—this story may open your eyes to what deliverance entails!

I. Portraits of Deliverance

The preceding context narrates how God delivered a woman named Lydia into salvation (Acts 16:11-15). The account of her conversion is the 1st portrait in Philippi of a life changed by God.

A. Physical and Spiritual: slave-girl (vv. 16-18)

The account of the demon possessed slave-girl whom Christ *physically* and *spiritually* delivered is the 2nd portrait in Philippi of a life changed by God. The demon possessed slave-girl spoke brazenly (mockingly?) of the gospel message Paul proclaimed. Its purpose was likely to discredit the gospel of God by associating it with the demonic. Like Jesus, Paul did not permit demons to proclaim the gospel of salvation. The gospel is to be proclaimed by believers, not opponents (Mt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Taking into account similar stories of Jesus exorcising demons from people who after being delivered became disciples, we assume that the slave-girl also became a disciple.

B. Physical and Emotional: Paul and Silas (vv. 25-26, 33a, 34a)

Although their persecutors tried to dishearten and discourage the gospel preachers, they were no match for the Spirit living in Paul and Silas. Paul and Silas rejoiced that they were counted worthy of persecution and disgrace for the sake of Christ (cf. Acts 4:24-30; 5:41). Despite their chains and pains, the presence of God means their hearts are free! They are *emotionally* delivered from despair. Then God delivered them *physically* with an earthquake that broke their chains. Later, Paul and Silas received kindness from the jailer when he received them into his home, washed their wounds, and served them food from his own table.

C. Physical, Emotional and Spiritual: the jailer and his household (vv. 27-34)

The account of the Philippian jailer is the 3rd portrait of a life changed by God. Shaken by the earthquake and his own near-suicide attempt, the jailer responded to Paul and Silas by repenting and believing the gospel. God delivered him *physically* from suicide, *emotionally* from his fear of the death penalty (the legal requirement if a prisoner escaped), and *spiritually* from the guilt of sin. His experience of joy in his newfound faith and eternal life, and his thankful response to his spiritual benefactors is a pattern of others’ dramatic conversion experiences.

II. Different Responses to Deliverance

A. Jealousy: slave-girl’s owners (vv. 19-21)

An example of the gospel threatening commercial interests (cf. Acts 19:25-27). The power of Christ and the deliverance the fortune-telling slave-girl received were worthless in the eyes of the slave owners because they loved money above all else. They were jealous of her deliverance because they preferred her services. They understood the gospel declares the lordship of Jesus Christ over all aspects of life—physical, emotional, spiritual, commercial, public, private, civic, familial, religious.

II. Different Responses to Deliverance (cont.)

B. Fear: city magistrates (vv. 22-23, 35-39)

In the first century Christianity was vying for legal approval as the true fulfillment of Judaism (an approved religion). Opponents charged Christians with practicing and advocating unlawful customs (it was illegal for Jews to proselytize Roman citizens). Paul's exorcism disturbed the religious customs (divination, fortune-telling, soothsaying) and the peace of the city, thus threatening the city officials. So they treated the apostles like common criminals—confining them to a maximum-security prison cell. Later, when the magistrates learned they had illegally punished Roman citizens, they feared that their jobs and the city's privileged "Roman colony" status were in jeopardy.

C. Joy: Paul and Silas (vv. 25, 40), the jailer and his household (v. 34)

Regardless of circumstances, rejoicing is the consistent response of those who believe the gospel (cf. Acts 8:39). The jailer and his household testify to this. Joy proceeds from faith; both are a gift of God. But rejoicing while suffering persecution is a recurring theme in Acts. Paul and Silas rejoiced by praising God in prayer and song in the most difficult circumstances. Upon release, Paul's and Silas's meeting with Lydia and the other Philippian believers was important to encourage them to joyfully endure the fallout and disgrace that they may encounter as a result of their missionary work in the city. The new believers must have learned that they too may be called upon to suffer for Christ, and to do so with joy.

III. The Purpose of All Deliverance

A. Not primarily for temporal or earthly benefits (vv. 26-28, 35-36)

Paul and Silas did not view the earthquake as a means of escape, but rather of gospel witness and an opportunity to prove their righteous character as Christ's ambassadors. Later, Paul also had God's purposes in mind when he was allowed to leave prison. He did not want the temporal or earthly benefits of deliverance unless it would clearly give God glory. This is universally true for all kinds of deliverance God brings to people (whether political, from danger, hardship, sorrow, oppression, etc).

B. To point to Christ who delivers us from our sin (vv. 29-34)

The apostles seized on the opportunity of their deliverance to point the jailer to Christ who delivers from sin. All deliverance finds its meaning in Christ the Deliverer because deliverance from sin is the ultimate deliverance ([Lk 4:16-20](#); [1 Cor 10:1-11](#)). Every single person needs Christ's sacrifice and forgiveness to deliver them from the wrath of God due to us for our sin.

C. To silence opposition to gospel proclamation (vv. 37-40)

Paul was not exercising his rights as a Roman citizen to rub it in the faces of the magistrates. Luke was concerned to show that Christian faith is compatible with Roman citizenship. Paul wanted to remove any public disrepute from the gospel message in Philippi. He wanted to protect the Philippian Christians from suffering similar persecution. Thus only a public apology was sufficient for Paul to leave the prison. One writer said, "Paul was asking for the injustice he and Silas suffered to be symbolically righted. It was a way of publicly taking their actions off the record and showing the apostles' innocence, a major public statement."

Conclusion – Story of God eventually grabbed hold of Charles Wesley to deliver him from his fear, jealousy, and misguided religiosity.