

“And The Prison Doors Swung Open”

Acts 16:16-40

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Teaching Aim: To explore the story of the Philippian jailor and see how his conversion story is very similar to our own. To realize salvation is a free gift from God that can neither be bought nor earned by good works. To understand salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. To recognize works *“that God sees as good”* come after regeneration (after we are born-again) and are motivated out of a heart of love for the Lord and the desire to please Him!

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)

Part I: A demon possessed slave girl with a spirit of divination (1 Cor. 16:16-19)

1. The first church in the continent of Europe very likely began in the Roman colony of Philippi in the house of Lydia (**vv. 14-15**). Who confronted Paul as he was on his way to pray (**vs. 16**)? This young lady was demon possessed. What kind of a spirit possessed her? How did this spirit manifest itself? Why did the girl’s owners appreciate this ability?

2. What did the girl cry as Paul went out to pray (**vs. 17**)? Was this the truth? Why do you think Paul became upset at her? Could it have been the mocking tone in her voice? Or was it because of who the Greeks thought the Most-High God was; *“Zeus”*?

3. How long did this harassment go on for (**vs. 18**)? What did Paul do to the demon that possessed the girl? How did the demon respond to the apostle’s command? Do Christians today have authority over demons? (See **Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1-2**) If so, in what way? Were the girl’s masters pleased that Paul delivered her from this demon (**vs. 19**)? Why or why not? What did they do to Paul and Silas as a result? Have you ever had anyone attack you because of your faith?

Part II: Mob mentality in Philippi and God’s intervention (1 Cor. 16:20-28)

1. Who did the slaveowners bring Paul and Silas to (**vs. 20**)? What is a magistrate? What accusation did the slaveowners bring against Paul and Silas? What trouble had the two supposedly brought to Philippi (**vs. 21**)? Why do so many people in the world still look down on the Jews today? How do you see our nation changing when it comes to Christians?

2. How did the multitude (or mob) respond when they heard the accusations (**vs. 22**)? Did they offer Paul and Silas a fair trial? Why or why not? The magistrates had individuals called "*lictors*" administer the punishment. It is said that each lictor carried both a rod and an ax. What two punishments did the lictors give to Paul and Silas? Note: This is where the saying, "*He was given a licking*" comes from.

3. According to **verse 23**, how severely were Paul and Silas beaten? Is there any significance in the two being placed in the inner prison and having their feet fastened in stocks (**vs. 24**)? What are stocks and why were they so painful to prisoners?

4. What were Paul and Silas doing at midnight while most of the city slept (**vs. 25**)? Why? Are you able to praise and worship God while going through difficult times? Why or why not? Who was listening in the background as the men prayed and sang praises to God? Do people still watch today to see how we, as Christians, handle the problems of life?

5. What did God do in response to the prayer and praise of Paul and Silas (**vs. 26**)? What two supernatural events took place at the moment of the earthquake? (See **Matt. 27:54; 28:2; Acts 4:31**)

6. Had the keeper of the prisoners been listening to the prayer and praise of Paul and Silas (**vs. 27**)? How is this man, the Philippian jailer, a good illustration of unbelievers today? What did it take to wake him up? Have you ever had a crisis in your life wake you up spiritually?

7. Why was the Philippian jailer preparing to kill himself (**vs. 27**)? (See Commentaries) How did Paul respond once he realized the man's intent (**vs. 28**)? What made the events of **verse 28** so unusual? Was this the normal reaction of believers in the Bible when the prison doors were supernaturally opened? (See **Acts 5:17-20; 12:4-11**) Why did the prisoners stay this time?

Part III: The conversion of the Philippian jailer and his household (1 Cor. 16:29-40)

1. Why do you think the Philippian jailer fell down at the feet of Paul and Silas (**vs. 29**)? Do you think the man was more afraid of the God of the Bible or his Roman authorities? What critically important question did the jailer ask Paul and Silas in **verse 30**? What are the two possible meanings of the jailer's intent with this question? Which of the two do you think is the correct interpretation?
2. Paul may have been using a play on words here as he answered the Philippian jailer in **verse 31**. What critical truth did Paul reveal to the jailer? Is there any other way to salvation than by grace through faith in Jesus Christ? (See **Matthew 7:13-14; John 3:16; 14:6; Acts 4:12**)? What can we learn about our salvation from the following verses? (See **Rom. 3:10-12; John 6:44, 65; Eph. 2:1-10**)
3. Is household salvation a guarantee for Christian families (**vs. 31b**)? Many people use this verse as a proof text for "*paedo*" or infant baptism, but is it? Note: In this particular case, the Philippian jailer's entire household heard the Gospel from Paul and believed (**vs. 32**).
4. What is the first thing the jailer and those living in his household did after coming to faith in Christ (**vs. 33**)? Church father Chrysostom (347-407 AD) wrote, "*He washed and was washed; he washed them from their stripes, and was himself washed from his sins.*" In what way was this true? Why is it important for everyone who believes in Jesus to follow Him in water baptism? (See **Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21-22**) Have you followed the Lord in water baptism? If not, what is stopping you?
5. What special event took place immediately following the baptism (**vs. 34**)? Not only were the prisoners free for the evening, but the Philippian jailer was free from his bondage to sin for eternity. What are some ways in your life that you've changed since coming to Christ?

6. What message came in the morning (**vs. 35**)? Why do you think the magistrates had a change of heart? Has God ever rocked your life to the point where you changed direction spiritually? If so, when? What happened?

7. What frightening truth did Paul reveal to the magistrates in **verse 36**? Do you think the jailer was glad to hear the news that he could release his prisoners? Who gave this message to Paul (**vs. 36**)?

8. How did Paul respond to the news of his release (**vs. 37**)? Why was this bad news for the magistrates? Did this decision put their jobs and the whole Roman colony at risk of rebuke from Rome? The magistrates wanted Paul and Silas out of town as quickly and quietly as possible. What demand did Paul make to them before leaving?

9. How did the officials respond when they heard of Paul's refusal to leave and his demands for them to come (**vv. 38-39**)? The magistrates realized for them to come was tantamount to a public apology. Why was this apology so important to the young church at Philippi?

10. What did Paul and Silas do once they were released from prison (**vs. 40**)? What was their purpose in going to Lydia's house? Encouragement is important in every church as life can be tough. What are some ways that other Christians have encouraged you in your spiritual walk? Are you in turn encouraging other Christians in their walk with the Lord?

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- Satan does his best to hinder the work of God; we can expect his attacks anytime we are making progress spiritually!
- Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world; it is helpful for every Christian to remember this spiritual truth when times are hard!
- The Jewish people are still the most hated people group in the world and things are beginning to get rough for Christians!
- Paul and Silas' midnight prayer and praise meeting ended in God removing their chains and opening the prison doors!
- The Philippian jailer, like many of the lost today, didn't realize he was the one in bondage!
- Sometimes God uses the earthshaking events of life to bring us into a closer walk with Him!
- To believe on the Lord Jesus is at the heart of the Gospel message and our salvation!

