

## ***What to do When You are in Prison - Acts 16:16-40*** **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

### **Notes from the Sermon**

We are beginning my favorite section of Acts. These stories of Gospel advance during Paul's second missionary journey are amazing. The themes of Acts are in full view. First, the victory of the Gospel which will go forth, reaching people to the ends of the earth, from all tribes, peoples, cultures, and nations. Second, the mission of God's people living Spirit filled lives as they proclaim Jesus, plant churches, and live transformed lives. Acts 16 shares the story of this church planting mission coming to Europe for the first time, as Paul and Silas arrive in Macedonia and the Roman metropolis of Philippi. When they arrived, they first visited a gathering of Jewish women meeting near a river for prayer and worship. Lydia becomes the first convert to Christianity in Macedonia. She was a Gentile from Asia, but came to Philippi as a wealthy fashion designer. Lydia had come to be a worshiper of the True and Living God, rejecting the idolatry of her culture, so she was gathered with the Jewish women to worship, and God opened her heart to believe the Gospel.

But, as Paul and Silas continued to meet for prayer and worship with this group, the story takes a bizarre turn as a demon-possessed slave girl with the ability to fortune-tell starts yelling out at Paul & Silas day after day. While what she was saying was true, that they were servants of the Most High God and their words were the message of salvation, this is not primarily how they wanted the Gospel proclaimed. So Paul turns and rescues her from the demon, casting it out, and by implication, bringing her too to Christ. The problem, though, is that her demonic abilities were a big money maker for her owners, which was now cut off. So they were ticked, turning on Paul and Silas and throwing them before the rulers of the city with crazy charges about their preaching. Without any trial, the magistrates beat these two missionaries with rods, leaving them bloody and wounded. They then have them thrown in to prison, and not the luxury suite in the Philippian jail, nope, they are thrown into the dark dungeon inner prison. The jailer is more than happy to put these men in chains and their feet in wooden stocks separating their legs in a V, designed to make standing impossible and sitting uncomfortable. Make note here, they got here being faithful to Jesus, preaching Jesus, and caring deeply for an outcast slave girl, rescuing her from a demon. How would you respond? I know I speak whine fluently, so I would have been complaining to God, wondering how he would ditch me in my worst times. And why didn't God rain fire, lightning, and hail on these horrible people to prove He exists and that I deserved better. C'mon!

This story is still shocking to me, and it was shocking to this jailer. Hurting, bleeding, and wounded, we find Paul & Silas praying and singing hymns of praise to Jesus in the middle of the night while the rest of the prisoners listened in trying to make sense of this kind of joy in that kind of place. Don't miss this, it was the praise and worshipful prayerfulness of these men that put them in a position to be used by God to reach the jailer, and I believe reach all the men in the jail. Think about it, if you were in jail and there was an earthquake that set you free from the chains that bound you and flew the door of the prison open, would you make a break for it? They don't? Why would the other prisoner stay? This praise rolls over into the showing of incredible grace and mercy to the jailer. He was involved in their oppression and mistreatment. He deserved to thrust that sword into his heart after his cruelty to God's messengers. Yet, Paul and Silas do not run, and they cry out to the jailer to put his sword away and

not take his own life. The result was that this man and his whole family come to faith in Christ. They wash Paul & Silas's wounds, but there is a greater washing when this whole family is baptized into the faith and into the new church in Philippi.

As I mentioned, Paul and Silas's joyful prayer and singing in a Philippian jail shocks me. Yet it is merely the Scripturally commanded response to suffering, persecution, and hardship found throughout the Bible. Over and over again we are told to rejoice in suffering, to give thanks in all things, to sing a new song to the Lord when we hurt. This seems crazy, yet worship from dark places actually puts us in the greatest position to meet Jesus in our suffering and at times is the greatest witness of the truth of the Gospel to a watching world.

### **Bible Reading for the Week**

#### Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Galatians 2	Galatians 3	Galatians 4	Galatians 5	Galatians 6	Leviticus 1	Leviticus 2

Reading from this past week: Acts 6:16-40

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 17:1-15

### **Family Worship**

Song - *Who you Say I Am*

[https://youtu.be/lcC1Bp13n\\_4](https://youtu.be/lcC1Bp13n_4)

#### Gospel Project

Unit: The People Disobey

Story: Elisha served as a prophet

Big Picture Question: What is idolatry?

Answer: Idolatry is a sin of the heart in which we love and value something else above God.

Scripture: 2 Kings 2

#### New City Catechism

Question #38: What is prayer?

Answer: Prayer is pouring out our hearts to God.

Verse: Psalm 62:8

#### Scripture

Acts 16:16-40

- What got Paul and Silas beaten and thrown in prison? Do you think that is fair?
- How do you believe you would respond if you were in Paul & Silas's situation? What was their response?
- Why is singing so important to our Christian faith? How does singing on Sunday morning prepare us for the dark places in life?
- Why might our response to suffering be the most effective witness of the truth of the Gospel to a watching world?

#### Prayer

\*Pray for those who are hurting and suffering in our congregation. Ask God to give them a desire to pray and a song of worship in their hearts.

\*Pray for our building project as things continue to move forward.

