

Acts 16 - John Karmelich

1. Have you ever thought about the physical cost to be a good Christian witness to others?
 - a) Before you stop reading in fear, let me explain further. ☺
 - b) I'm not talking about the pains of life. That is a different topic. Jesus promises us joy *through* those rough times, if we get our focus on God and not the problem.
 - c) I'm talking about the extent you are willing to go, the pain your willing to bear, the sacrifices you are willing to endure just to be a good witness as a Christian.
 - d) After reading this chapter over and over again, that question kept coming in my mind.
 - i) To paraphrase a line I once heard: If you are not on the front line fighting the enemy, as a Christian you should be in the background providing the "ammo".
 - ii) The "front line" is direct confrontation as a witness for Jesus Christ.
 - a) Pastors, evangelists, missionaries are front-line people.
 - b) Sometimes we are front-line people in one-on-one situations.
 - iii) The "background" is prayer support.
 - a) I've recently changed about my prayer life is to learn *how* to specifically pray for people. This way God can be glorified through the results.
2. OK you ask, and that's all well and good. What does that have to do with Chapter 16?
 - a) Just about everything!
 - b) We are going to read about Paul's *physical suffering*.
 - i) Not in terms of delays, frustrations, hurt feelings, but real, physical pain.
 - ii) We're going to read of Paul & Silas being whipped and thrown in jail all for the purpose of winning people to Christ. Stop and let that sink in for a moment.
 - a) The only reason he allows that pain is to win people to Christ!
 - b) We'll read in this chapter that Paul is a Roman Citizen. As a Roman, he cannot be beaten in a trial. Despite this knowledge, Paul *allows himself* to be beaten just to be a witness to other prisoners.
 - iii) I'm not condoning robbing a bank just so you could be a good witness to prisoners! ☺ But sometimes, people are wrongly arrested, or in some countries arrested for just *being* a Christian. God often uses those situations for His glory.
 - c) Speaking of allowing physical pain, in this chapter we also get introduced to Timothy.
 - i) 1st and 2nd Timothy are both letters written from Paul to Timothy.
 - ii) One of the things that caught my attention is that Timothy *allows himself* to be circumcised as to not offend the Jews.
 - a) This may sound a contradiction to the events of Chapter 15, but it is not.
 - (1) I'll explain that when we get to that verse.
 - b) What I want you to notice is that Timothy allows himself to go through the physical pain of circumcision just to be a witness for Jesus Christ.
3. Chapter 16 begins the 2nd Missionary Journey of Paul.
 - a) Technically it began a few verses back in Chapter 15, but that was just an introduction.
 - i) It has been five years since the last missionary journey.
 - b) One of the big-themes of the Book of Acts is to watch how the Holy Spirit works.
 - i) God has a redemptive plan for mankind.
 - ii) God works *through people* to achieve that plan.
 - iii) Reading Acts, you can see places where God calls people to do things, and the Holy Spirit is mentioned as the one leading the action.
 - iv) In Chapter 16 we'll read of the Holy Spirit *stopping* Paul from going to certain places. How the Holy Spirit stops them is not stated so we can only speculate.

- v) The one thing I've discovered about the way God works is that he controls our actions as long as we are moving. God rarely blesses or blocks your actions if you are standing still. It is when you are seeking his will and moving forward and God directs our paths. (Study Proverbs 3:5-6 for this application.)
 - vi) I've also found that watching God work is often easiest in hindsight. It is difficult to understand what we are going through, but looking back on our life it is easy to see where God guided us and blocked us.
4. With that, let's start Chapter 16: Verse 1: He (Paul) came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek.
- a) We learned in Chapter 15 Paul starts this journey by going back to the new Christians he visited on the 1st journey. Paul wanted to see their progress.
 - i) A good minister/missionary *cares* for the people he leads to Christ. It's not an ego-thing ("let's make sure they're still Christians"), but a deep down desire to see them mature and grow in their faith.
 - ii) The #1 responsibility of all Christians as we interact with each other is to "build up the Body of Christ". Our primary mission as Christians is to minister to *each other* to help us grow and become better Christians. The "body of Christ" refers to all believers. This is why God gave us spiritual gifts in the first place.
 - a) "It was he (God) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:11-12, NIV)
 - b) Evangelism (bringing in new members) is a sub-set of this goal.
 - b) We also learned in Chapter 15 that Paul takes Silas with him. Silas was a Jewish Christian from Jerusalem who was one of the men appointed by the church leaders to take the "you-don't-have-to-be-circumcised" letter to the Gentile churches in Antioch.
 - c) The first place we read of Paul and Silas visiting is Derbe, and then Lystra.
 - i) Lystra is the place where the local residents attempted to kill Paul (Acts 14:19). In fact, Paul's traveling companions thought he was dead at one point.
 - a) That shows Paul's willingness to face danger just to win new converts and to check and see how the existing converts are doing.
 - d) Here we get introduced to Timothy.
 - i) He was probably in his late teen's/early 20's at this point.
 - ii) We read in Paul's 2nd letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5) that his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice were both Christians, and were probably converted on Paul's first missionary journey.
5. Verse 2: The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. ³ Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.
- a) Given the fact that Timothy's mother was a Jew and father was a Greek (Verse 1) was a big deal. In many cultures, being a "half-breed" of 2 cultures is a difficult issue and makes for a tough childhood.
 - i) In Jewish cultures, if your mother is Jewish, you are considered a Jew by birth.
 - b) Since Timothy's was half Jewish and half Greek, he probably understood both cultures.
 - i) Paul was 100% Jewish, but raised in Greek culture. That may have been a reason why Paul wanted Timothy to join him on the missionary trip.
 - ii) Because Paul wanted to witness to both Jewish and Greek cultures, Timothy would be a good asset for the trip.

- c) Verse 2 says, “The brothers (Christians) ...spoke well of him.”
 - i) This means that Timothy has a good reputation among the local Christians.
 - a) One can assume that it meant he had strong faith.
 - b) That was another reason for Paul wanting to take him on the journey.
 - d) What’s a modern application of all this? When God calls us to witness to people, God will often put us in situations with people who have common interests, common backgrounds, or share common problems.
 - i) Here are some examples: Big groups include “Jews for Jesus” and “Campus Crusades for Christ, (a national college ministry)”. Another example would be a small group of people who are suffering with a similar issue. There are thousands of specific missionary groups that focus on common interests, common geography, or common backgrounds.
 - e) This verse is also a good lesson in mentoring. Paul picks a young man, Timothy, who he can “show the ropes” of ministry.
 - i) There is also an old Christian expression that goes: “Every Paul needs a Timothy and every Timothy needs a Paul”.
 - f) OK, on to the big issue of the verse: Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised?
 - i) Chapter 15 was a whole big mess over whether Gentile Christians had to be circumcised. Paul vehemently opposed this, and the council in Jerusalem sent a letter, that Paul carried to be delivered to the local churches.
 - ii) So was having Timothy circumcised a lapse of faith on Paul’s’ part? No!
 - iii) This is not about requirements, this is about love.
 - iv) Paul said it best himself: “Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.” (1 Corinthians 9:19-20 NIV)
 - a) What is Paul saying in these verses? I don’t have to eat kosher, or be circumcised, or dress a certain way, but I don’t want to offend anyone. In order to win people for Christ I’ll do whatever it takes.
 - v) The issue of circumcision was such a strong point of contention, Timothy needed to be circumcised just to get the conversation started. I suspect that the Jewish Christians wouldn’t even listen to “The Letter” if Timothy was not circumcised, especially since he was known around the area as a “half-breed”.
 - vi) A modern example might be wearing a “coat and tie” to church. This is not a necessity to go to church. If I were to deliver a sermon on that topic, I *would* wear a -coat and tie as to not offend people who think that way.
 - g) Next, let’s give a little credit to Timothy. In order to *be* a missionary, Paul says Timothy had to be circumcised. That’s a painful thing & the journey hasn’t even started yet.
 - i) I always wondered how the Jews checked these things? Did they require Timothy to lift his robe to verify it, or did they take his word for it? (Sorry! ☺)
6. OK, way too much time on one verse. Let’s move on, Verse 4: As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. ⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.
- a) Paul, Silas, Timothy (others?) started traveling around, reading the letter from Jerusalem stating they don’t have to be circumcised and the list of things to do as to not offend the Jews (not eating strangled food, drinking blood, etc.)

- b) Verse 5 says, “The churches...grew daily in numbers”. The NIV translation here is a little misleading. It seems to imply that just by reading this letter the church grew in strength. It is more about Paul & his associates delivering sermons, praying for these churches, encouraging them, working with their needs, so the churches grew.
- i) That’s a “formula” for any church growth. Not any special marketing plan, but the simple studying of God’s word, praying and encouraging each other.
 - ii) With that “formula”, joy and happiness abounds. That is contagious. Others will come to see what all the joy is about. That is being a witness for Christ.
7. Verse 6: Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.⁸ So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.
- a) Paul and his companions have the “door closed” on their witnessing opportunities.
 - b) “How” the Holy Spirit prevented them from witnessing in these cities is interesting speculation. Theories include:
 - i) 1. Paul & Silas have the gift of prophecy. It may have come by “revelation”.
 - ii) 2. The keepers of the city gates may have been hostile to them entering.
 - iii) 3. It may have been a simple case of unsuccessful witnessing. The conclusion in hindsight was that the Holy Spirit was not working in this situation.
 - c) Something interesting to notice here is how the author Luke subtly inserts the “Trinity” aspect of God:
 - i) In Verse 6, The Holy Spirit prevented them from preaching in this province.
 - ii) In Verse 7, The Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to enter a town.
 - iii) In Verse 10, coming up, after a vision, Paul concluded that God, referring to the father, gave Paul a vision to preach in Macedonia.
 - iv) Luke uses the different aspect of the Trinity interchangeably, almost as if he understands their equality as God.
8. Verse 9: During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.
- a) One of the important words to underline in Verse 10 is “we”.
 - i) “We” refers to Luke. He joins the group at this point.
 - a) Luke keeps himself in the background, and doesn’t talk much about himself. We do know he was a Greek, and may have come from Macedonia, which is a part of Greece.
 - b) We just don’t know why/how Luke joins the group, he just does.
 - b) I should clear something up here. I’ve referred to the “Greek” culture a lot. Remember that prior to the Roman Empire, the Greek Empire included all this territory and Israel. The influence of the Greeks was still strong during this time. The word “Greek” up to now, referred to the Greek culture not the Greek people.
 - i) Macedonia is part of Greece. Until now, we have not been in Greece.
 - c) Notice in Verse This is a vision, and not a dream.
 - i) Who was this man in the vision? We don’t know.
 - ii) How did Paul know this man was from Macedonia? Name tag? A “I love Macedonia T-shirt? ☺ Again, we just take the text at face value.
 - iii) Some suspect the man was Luke himself, as Luke joins the party.
 - iv) We’ll read of a Phillipian in charge of the jail, who is the first male-converted. Some argue he was the man in the vision.
 - v) It is all speculation.

- d) This leads to the question: How should Christians today feel about “visions”?
 - i) Visions are biblical. On the day of Pentecost in Acts Chapter 2, Peter quoted Joel: 'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. (Joel 2:28 NIV)
 - ii) Remember that the Bible is the ultimate authority:
 - a) No “vision” will contradict what is Biblically sound.
 - iii) In this story, the vision was confirmed by the Paul’s future success in his missionary journey. Use that standard as a guide.
 - iv) One of my favorite Bible teachers, who has now passed away, once stated he had a vision where he would be personally killed by the Anti-Christ. He had a “post-tribulation rapture” view partially due to his vision. Since he is now with the Lord, I can safely say this vision did not come true. The good news is that he did not let this vision prevent him from having the Bible base as the primary emphasis for his teaching.
 - v) Remember a vision in the night could be the result of too much pepperoni pizza and not from God! ☺)
 - a) “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, (1st John 4:1, NIV).
 - e) Paul’s vision to go into Macedonia was actually a major step in world history.
 - i) Greece is considered part of Europe. Until now, all the growth of the church is associated with the continent of Asia.
 - ii) Look at how God was working here: Luke joined the missionary team. Luke wrote Acts. If Luke had not decided to join at this point, he may never have written the Gospel of Luke or the Book of Acts. It is just another example of how God works out the details for His Glory.
 - iii) I don’t think Macendonia, as a territory was any more/less important than other location to Paul. The fact that through this vision, the Gospel was spread into Europe changed the whole course of western history for the next 2,000 years!
9. Verse 11, onto Macedonia: From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. ¹² From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.
- a) Notice Paul wasted no time on taking off to Macedonia. Paul saw the vision and acted upon it.
 - b) In hindsight, the fact that God was “closing the doors” on Paul’s missionary efforts in the past couple of cities probably made Paul hunger for success. Notice how God used that hunger to get Paul moving where God wanted him to.
 - c) They made the sailing journey in 2 days. The return trip took 5 days. On the boat, they had a good wind at their back. I take this as a sign of God guiding their actions.
 - i) Remember what the disciples said about Jesus after he calmed a storm:
 - a) “The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"” (Matthew 8:27 NIV)
 - d) A little about Phillipi:
 - i) This was the leading city of Macedonia. That is probably why Paul picked it.
 - ii) The letter to the Philippians is the letter to the church of Phillipi.

- e) Luke writes more verses about Phillipi than any other city on any other missionary journey in Acts.
 - i) Commentators suspect this might be Luke's hometown, given his interest.
 - ii) This is the type of trivia Bible commentators love to point out, where there is no great application! ☺
- f) Notice the verse 12 says, "We stayed there several days".
 - i) Luke is simply stating they took a few days to get settled, scout the area, etc., prior to beginning evangelizing. A good support verse for rational "planning".
- 10. Verse 13: On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.¹⁴ One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God.
 - a) Paul's favorite place to start witnessing is to find the local synagogue. Maybe that is why Verse 12 stated the "several days" reference for Paul & company to scout the area.
 - b) A Jewish tradition (not in the Old Testament) is that in order to have a synagogue you need 10 men, as in 10 separate heads of households.
 - i) If there were not 10 men, then the "less-than-10" were to meet every Sabbath by a waterside like a river. This was necessary for ritual cleansing before services.
 - ii) Since Paul couldn't find a synagogue, he went to the river to see if any Jews were gathering.
 - iii) In these meetings, Scriptures would be read and guest speakers would be allowed to talk afterwards.
 - iv) There were only women gathering here. On a side-soapbox note, I often find women are more spiritual, statistically than men are. Far more women go to church than men. Unfortunately, this often shows a lack of leadership on men's part to be the spiritual leaders of the household.
 - c) Here we get introduced to women named Lydia.
 - i) She was a businesswoman who sold purple-dyed cloth.
 - a) Archeologists have discovered a shellfish with a purple dye that comes from this region.
 - b) Luke calls her a "worshiper of God". It is good to see successful business people who realize there is more to life than making money. There is still a spiritual side of life that is required for happiness.
- 11. Verse 14 continued: "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.
 - a) First thing to notice is "The Lord" opened her heart, not Paul's preaching.
 - b) One has to remember that about witnessing. We don't get rewarded based on how many people we convert. Our job is just to be witnesses and preach the Word of God. It is up to God himself to convert people. That is one of the roles of the Holy Spirit.
 - i) "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:8 NIV)
 - c) Remember that conversion is an individual process, not a group dynamic.
 - i) I don't think Lydia got converted and then Paul went and baptized the whole household. I suspect they were all present.

- d) This verse is used in the great debate over “infant baptism”.
 - i) It doesn’t state the age of Lydia’s children. We don’t know if they were children or grown. My point is you can’t make an argument for nor against infant baptism based on this verse.
 - ii) One thing I’ll say in favor of youth-baptism is that you never in the Scriptures read of anyone being baptized *twice*. You can lose your rewards in heaven for not being obedient to God, but not your salvation if you believe Jesus is Lord. (I’m getting into the great “pre-destined” vs. “free-will” debate here.) My main point is simply that this verse is used in that classical debate.
12. Verse 16 begins a whole new topic, some time in the future. The time lapse between Verses 15 and 16 is not given. Verse 16: Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune telling.¹⁷ This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."
- a) We are dealing here directly with the occult.
 - b) God allows Satan supernatural powers.
 - i) Commentators are divided on whether satanic powers can actually be used to predict the future, or was she just “stating the obvious” that these men were “servants of the Most High God”.
 - ii) The purpose of satanic powers is always for self-gratification. It comes under many names and forms, but it is always for the purpose of glorifying *man* and not God. Notice the powers were being used to make her owner rich.
 - a) How different is that from the fortunetellers of today?
 - b) How about the TV Evangelistic “sham-artists” who promise to “give you special revelations from God” if you just send in your ten dollars”
 - (1) Remember this verse when you hear that: “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, (2nd Peter 1:20 NKJV)
 - c) God allows these Satanic powers to exist because God wants us to choose Him out of our own free will. Therefore God had to create alternative choices that at first, sound appealing.
13. Notice how Paul deals with this, Verse 18: She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.
- a) Sometimes you can wonder, “Hey, what’s the harm in letting her talk? She wasn’t condemning them. She was simply stating the truth”. Why did Paul have to rebuke her?
 - b) Remember when you read the Gospels, Jesus many times exorcised demons even when they were declaring Him as God. Why is that?
 - c) In both cases, it is for the same reason: God will not accept the testimony of demons as a witness.
 - i) If you want someone to testify on your behalf, don’t you want a reputable witness? If that witness has an immoral lifestyle or a long police record, do you want them saying in court how “honorable” you are? This is a credibility issue!
 - ii) Also remember that Satan often uses “some truth” as a basis for destruction.
 - a) Many false-teachers and false prophets join the church. They often teach good, Biblical ideas for starters. It is usually *later* they go off-course on some strange doctrine.

- b) This is why in the Old Testament, in order to be a “Prophet”, you had to be 100% correct, all the time. If not, it’s a death sentence. (Deut. 13: 1-5). This is why a lot of Bible prophecies have a double-fulfillment. The short-term fulfillment is to validate the prophet. The long-term fulfillment usually pointed some aspect of Jesus’ life, purpose or ministry.
 - d) Notice how fast Paul exorcises this demon. No fancy show. No big deal. He simply calls on the authority given to him (and us!) by Jesus to exorcise that demon.
 - i) There is an important point to be made here. We as Christians tend to spend too much time worried about demons and not enough to deal with topics like false teachers and false doctrines.
 - ii) Look how many verses in the New Testament deal with demons and compare that with how many verses dealing with false teachers and false doctrines.
 - iii) I strongly believe demons exist. I’ve heard stories of exorcisms that give me the chills. My point is simply to look at the Bible as a whole entity, and notice the relevancy of the issue of demons in comparison to other issues the church should be focused upon. The point is simply not to overemphasize the issue.
 - iv) Some demons are harder to cast out than others.
 - a) Remember Jesus words: “ So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." (Mark 9:29 NKJV).
 - (1) When Jesus says “this kind”, that means there is more than one kind of demon.
 - (2) This implies that exorcism of *some* demons require more prayer (and possibly fasting) than others. Other commentators say it requires more of a *consistent* life of prayer and fasting.
14. Verse 19: When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."
- a) Remember I said that the purpose of demonic power is for self-gratification. Notice how this slave girl’s power brought her owner money. Once the income was gone, her master wanted revenge for his losses.
 - i) Some people have very hard hearts. It never occurred to this guy that “Gee, maybe I should become a Christian. They are more powerful than my slave-girl. Maybe I should hear what they have to say.”
 - ii) He was so focused on his loss of income, nothing else mattered.
 - a) “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” (1 Tim. 6:10a NIV)
 - b) A little historical background might be helpful here to explain this verse.
 - i) Philippi was a significant battleground in Roman history. The current emperor of Rome won a decisive battle in a civil war at this point. Because the local residents helped him, Philippians were granted special privileges as Roman citizens. They prided themselves as being “good Romans”.
 - a) The slave owner uses “Roman Pride” as an excuse for an accusation.
 - b) The slave owner assumed Paul and Silas were non-Roman citizens. Non citizens had no civil rights, and could be arrested without charges.

- c) Notice the anti-Semitism (anti-Jewishness). Paul & Silas must have dressed in a way that made it obvious they were Jews.
- i) Why did the locals hate the Jews? Also, why does Anti-Semitism exist?
 - a) Part of the answer is demonic. There's a theory common in Protestant theology that a believing remnant of Jews are needed to petition the return of the Messiah. If there are no Jews left, Satan wins. (I'm running long, I'll save that for another day!)
 - b) Another reason is simply because Jews lead a strict moral life. "Living" the 10 commandments tends to make people feel guilty who are not. Most people instinctively know that living the 10 commandments is the right thing to do. Therefore, they vent their guilt on those who do.
15. Verse 22: The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten.²³ After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.²⁴ Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.
- a) I suspect that anti-Semitism ran strong in this crowd joined the attack.
 - b) Don't read, "flogging" lightly. This is a severe whipping that tore flesh and left permanent scars. People have died from flogging.
 - c) The order to "guard them carefully" may be because the slave owner knew they had special powers. They had the power to cast out the demon, thus the order to keep a close eye on them. Little did the jailer know that this order led to Paul & Silas being a personal witness to him.
 - d) What happened to Timothy and Luke here? The "we's" become "they's" here.
 - i) We don't know. Maybe they weren't there at the time the demon was cast out.
 - ii) Maybe they ran for their lives during the arrest.
 - iii) Maybe Timothy and Luke didn't "look" Jewish and were not arrested.
 - iv) All we know is they join them 2 chapters later when Luke uses "we" again.
16. The best verse of the whole chapter, Verse 25: About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.
- a) Luke does not record them saying "Dear Lord, get us out of here!"
 - b) As I stated on page 1, Paul & Silas will declare their Roman citizenship in a few verses. If they declared it earlier, the whipping would not be necessary!
 - i) That fact alone is one of the greatest stories in the chapter and the reason for my introduction about Paul being a great witness for Christ.
 - c) The last part of this verse says, "The other prisoners were listening to them".
 - i) You never know where and when you will be a witness.
 - ii) The other prisoners expected Paul & Silas to be moaning in pain.
 - iii) The other prisoners expected Paul & Silas to be praying to their Gods to release them from prison, or at least, for vengeance.
 - iv) The other prisoners may have heard about Paul's power to cast out a demon. Word tends to spread quickly in jail.
 - v) The fact they were singing with joy *despite the pain*, they were listening!
 - a) That is a great witness as a Christian. In no matter what the situation, if you can focus on God, and not your problems, you will be singing praises to God. You are saved. You are going to be spending eternity in heaven. The rest is almost *irrelevant* in comparison. That is how they could be praising God. They were praising God for sending Jesus. They were praising God that their sins were forgiven. Despite the pain, they could focus on God. That gets people to pay attention to you.

- b) For those of you who like symbolism, there has been many sermons preached about non-believers being “prisoners” of sin, and being released by hearing and seeing the witnesses of Christians.
17. Verse 26: Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.
- a) God is aware of our pain. I believe that because Paul & Silas focuses on praising God and not their situation, God sent a miraculous earthquake that opened the doors and shook the chains loose. We'll read later that the prisoners converted because of this. This leads back to the symbolism of becoming a Christian “opens the prison doors and sets your chains free”.
- b) This is no ordinary earthquake. Earthquakes don't cause chains to be loosed. It is a supernatural experience.
- c) The main reason I believe the other prisoners were converted is that nobody made a run for it. The Holy Spirit changed their life so much in that moment, they were obedient enough to not leave the prison.
18. Verse 27: The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.
- a) We read hear of the jailer wanting to kill himself. Why?
- b) In Roman law, if a prisoner escapes, the penalty for the jailer was to serve their term. The jailer thought all those prisoners escaped and he would have to spend the rest of *his* life in jail. The shock was enough to want to make him commit suicide.
- c) Luckily, Paul was interested in *his* conversation as well, as stated in Verse 28.
19. Verse 28: But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
- a) The jailer must have heard about Paul's ability to cast out demons. He probably heard the singing as well. The fact they were still there, impressed the jailer enough to asked how *he* could be saved.
20. Paul's response to one of the great questions of history: How can I be saved? Verse 31: They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household."
- a) Notice “they” replied”. It could have been Paul & Silas or other prisoners as well. I suspect Paul & Silas were preaching the Gospel in Jail.
- b) The verse says to “believe in the Lord Jesus” Not just as Savior, but Lord of your life.
- i) There is no mention of repentance by the jailer. Most commentators (and I) believe the jailer, who was on the verge of suicide, was already repented of his past lifestyle to even ask Paul the question.
- c) Verse 31 is controversial when Paul says, “you and your household will be saved.”
- i) The Bible is real clear that the Gospel message is individual. You cannot accept it on behalf of another.
- ii) Many commentators believe his household (family members, possibly servants) were present to this conversation. Thus Paul was addressing the group.
- iii) I remember hearing Allistar Begg comment on this verse from a different perspective (paraphrasing): “Show me a man who converts to the Lord, and I'll show you a household that becomes a Christian. When the father of a house becomes a strong Christian leader, the household follows”.
21. Verse 32: Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.
- a) This gives some support to the view that the jailer's household was present in the conversation.

22. Verse 33: At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family.
- a) It is always amazing to watch how much a person changes after being born-again.
 - i) The jailer went from the one whipping Paul & Silas to washing their wounds.
 - ii) He was a man who wanted to commit suicide a few moments ago. Now he was "filled with joy because he had come to believe in God" (Verse 34).
23. Verse 35: When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." ³⁶ The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace."
- a) Reading between the lines, you get the impression that the city-magistrates just wanted to "teach these Jews a lesson, Let's have them flogged and we'll let 'em spend a night in jail". Here was their release the next morning.
24. Verse 37: But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out." ³⁸ The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. ³⁹ They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city.
- a) You have to love Paul's "hoospa". Most people, when giving the orders to leave prison, leave quickly, especially after a bad beating.
 - i) Paul said "we're citizens" you have to escort us out".
 - b) Paul was making them realize *now* that they were Roman Citizens. Romans cannot be beaten without a trial.
 - i) Some background commentaries suggest that Paul and Silas must have carried some sort of identification that proved their citizenship. To make that statement falsely was a capitol crime.
 - c) I can't prove it, but I suspect the reason Paul did this was to witness to the Magistrates. The Magistrates were probably feeling guilty and scared of punishment for beating a Roman citizen. What a better opportunity to teach about Jesus and forgiveness of sins!
 - d) I love in Verse 39 that they request that they leave the City. That is another simple attack of the enemy "Will you just go away, we don't want you preaching that stuff here!" Notice Paul's response in Verse 40:
25. Verse 40: After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left.
- a) Paul & Silas left the town "when they were good and ready". Instead of leaving town they went back to say goodbye to the new Christians.
 - b) Notice in Verse 40 Paul & Silas met with "the brothers". Who are these "brothers"?
 - i) I doubt it was just the Phillipian Jailer. Most commentators believe it was the other prisoners who were converted!
26. Thus ends the ministry in Phillipi. The next verse, which begins chapter 17, has Paul his band of missionaries on the road to another town. With that, I'm way past my limit and we'll pick it up next time.
27. Let's Pray: Father we thank you for the opportunities you present before us. Give us the faith, and courage to walk in our faith and face the challenges you give us. Help us to remember that being a witness for you is far more important than our rights, our privileges and our circumstances. May we, like Paul & Silas learn to have joy through all our circumstances, as we bring you the glory, in Jesus name we pray, amen.