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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## Acts 16.

(2013)

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The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## Acts 16.

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### Topics.

- Paul circumcised Timothy and takes him to Jerusalem.
- The Holy Spirit forbids Paul and Timothy to go to Asia.
- Paul has a vision of a man in Macedonia.
- Lydia and her family are baptised.
- A slave girl who had a spirit of divination.
- A great earthquake releases Paul and Silas from prison.
- The magistrates apologise to Paul and Silas and take them out of prison.

**The Previous Chapter:** in the previous chapter some Jews at Antioch who believed in the word of the Lord still believed they had to be circumcised and keep the customs of Moses to be saved. The apostles and elders discuss this matter at Jerusalem and come to the conclusion Gentiles should only abstain from idols, sexual immorality and eating animals that have been strangled and drinking their blood. The chapter ended with Paul and Barnabas having a sharp disagreement over John Mark so Barnabas sailed to Cyprus with John and Paul sailed to Syria and Cilicia with Silas.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

### Paul Circumcised Timothy and takes him to Jerusalem.

Acts 16:1-5 ----- <sup>1</sup>Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. <sup>2</sup>He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. <sup>3</sup>Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. <sup>4</sup>As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

**NOTE:** Paul left with Silas (Acts 15: 40) and Timothy (Acts 16:3).

Timothy's father was a Greek and his mother was a Jewish woman who believed in the word of the Lord, obviously both parents had a good influence on Timothy since he was well spoken of by the Christian brothers in two cities (Lystra and Iconium). There is no better testimony a brother or sister can have than those who know them speak well of them. For Paul to ask Timothy to go with him his faith and understanding of the word of the Lord must have been quiet amazing.

### Paul Circumcises Timothy.

Circumcising Timothy so that they would be accepted by the Jews who held fast to the customs of Moses and the covenant of circumcision that God had made with Abraham had nothing to do with salvation. This also speaks volumes about Timothy's commitment to the Lord, he is a grown man, yet he submits himself to being circumcised for the sole purpose of being able to share the world of the Lord with Jews who would normally reject an uncircumcised Gentile man.

### The decisions reached by the Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem.

The words, "They delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem," (v4) refer to the

apostles and elders meeting at Jerusalem (in the previous chapter) and to their answer regarding the question, "Should Gentiles who believe in the word of the Lord be circumcised to be saved?" To which they concluded that Gentiles in Christ need not concern themselves with the customs of Moses or circumcision but should abstain from idols, sexual immorality, eating animals that have been strangled and drinking blood, the apostles and elders said if Gentiles in Christ do these they are doing well (See Acts 15:1-29).

### **The Holy Spirit forbids Paul and Timothy to go to Asia.**

Acts 16:6-12 ----- <sup>6</sup>And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. <sup>7</sup>And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. <sup>8</sup>So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. <sup>9</sup>And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." <sup>10</sup>And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. <sup>11</sup>So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, <sup>12</sup>and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days.

The expression, "Having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" (v6) and the term, "The Spirit of Jesus did not allow them," (v7) can have two levels of meaning: -

1. Christ through the Spirit warned them not to go.
2. They were aware of the persecution in Asia against those proclaiming Christ so in their spirit knew it would be foolish to go when there were much safer places they could take the Good News of the Gospel.

Often the Spirit of God works through our own intuition (or spirit) it is that unction that we sometimes feel in our being that urges us to do or not do a thing even though we can't exactly say why, we know within us by the peace and calm we feel, but this does not mean we should forsake intellect, logic and common sense and it should be noted, if the unction of the spirit is leading a person into something that would be offensive to God it is certainly not the Holy Spirit leading them.

**NOTICE:** the book of Acts says Paul, Silas and Timothy, "Having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit" to speak the word in Asia attempted to go into Bithynia but, "The Spirit of Jesus did not allow them" (Acts 16:6-7). Writers of Scripture can interchange names this way since the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit will never contradict each other, all three are in perfect unity and therefore whether it is written the Spirit of the LORD, the Spirit of Christ or the Holy Spirit is not technically important, since whatever one says the other two will be in perfect agreement with.

### **Paul has a Vision of a Man in Macedonia.**

Paul, Silas and Timothy after Journeying through Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia and being warned not to go to Asia or Bithynia go down to Troas where Paul has a vision. In the vision Paul sees a man of Macedonia urging him to go to Macedonia and help them. Paul with Silas and Timothy immediately leave Troas and sailed to Macedonia believing God had called them to preach the Gospel to the people of Macedonia.

### **A Vision Appeared to Paul.**

This vision appeared to Paul (v9) a vision can relate to a spectacle gazed at by the eyes or a movie played out in the mind. In most cases God gives the picture or vision then the prophet speaks or writes it in their own words. Sometimes the same biblical event or experience is spoken of as an actual and real event, while at other times the same event maybe recorded as a vision (an image or mental experience within the mind). A biblical vision is always under God's control and can appear as a movie played out on the screen of the imagination of the mind (similar to a dream)

or it may appear as a hologram appearing in the air that is actually seen by the eyes of the prophet or to whoever God chooses to give the vision to. The vision communicates the LORD'S will or future events to the prophet who then proceeds to tell the vision to the people, sometimes in their own words and at other times in the exact words the LORD has spoken to them in the vision.

### **Lydia and her Family are Baptised.**

Acts 16:13-15 ----- <sup>13</sup>And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. <sup>14</sup>One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. <sup>15</sup>And after she was baptised, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Paul Silas and Timothy have sailed from Troas and arrived in Philippi, a leading city of Macedonia and a Roman colony (v12).

This is fascinating; on the Sabbath day Paul, Silas and Timothy go to a notable place of prayer and it's not in a cathedral or opulent church building but alongside a riverside. Women had gathered here no-doubt to pray. Clearly God does not need expensive and opulent buildings for us to be in communion with him. Here Paul meets Lydia a devoted worshipper of God who it appears had her own business selling purple goods.

**The Lord opened Lydia's Heart:** though Lydia was a worshipper of God her understanding of the LORD was according to the Old Covenant and the customs of Moses, but when Paul began to tell her and her family the Good News of the Gospel they listened, believed and were all baptised. Lydia was so thrilled with the word of the Lord she prevailed on Paul, Silas and Timothy to stay with her family.

**NOTICE:** it was the Lord who opened Lydia's heart to hear Paul (v14). When a person has a humble spirit and truly desires to know the word of the Lord more than protect their own pride, ego, career, success or their position of importance and fame the Lord is able to open their hearts to perceive his word. The author of Chronicles wrote: -

- The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him (2 Chron. 16:9).

**NOTE:** blameless in this context does not mean without sin, but refers to a heart that is humble and honest that is seeking God to know Him because he is God, contrasted to a heart that is prideful and hypocritical and seeking God for ones on gain.

### **A Slave Girl who had a Spirit of Divination.**

Acts 16:16-18 ----- <sup>16</sup>As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup>She followed Paul and us crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." <sup>18</sup>And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

**Divination:** means to determine by lot, a magical scroll or by an oracle (prophecy, vision or prediction) something that brings a reward of some kind, by implication it can refer to a divine sentence, a soothsayer (somebody telling or predicting the future). It carries the idea of seeking knowledge by supernatural means: the methods or practice of attempting to foretell the future or discovering the unknown through omens, oracles, or supernatural powers or premonition meaning, a feeling of foreboding about something that is going to happen.

- This girl is owned by others who expect her to make for them money (v19).

**NOTICE:** the slave girl was speaking the truth, she was not saying anything wrong or that anybody would not have known, no-one needed to be a fortune teller to know the things she was crying out since it was very obvious to everyone that Paul, Silas and Timothy were representatives of God and proclaiming salvation. It is possible the girl saw Paul as a threat to her ability to make money and was calling these things out to mock and ridicule them thus the reason Paul by the power of Christ rebukes her and she is silenced.

### **The slave girls' owners drag Paul and Silas before the Rulers.**

Acts 16:19-21 ----- <sup>19</sup>But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. <sup>20</sup>And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. <sup>21</sup>They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice."

**NOTE:** from this time on only Paul and Silas are mentioned so it is possible Timothy was not with them when they were taken captive, nevertheless in the following chapter Timothy is with Paul and Silas in Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:14).

The people who owned the slave girl were horrified that their hope of making loads of money from her was gone so they dragged Paul and Silas before the rulers of the city who then took them to the magistrates (judges) telling them that Paul and Silas are Jews encouraging and promoting customs that are not lawful to the Romans which among other things would be teaching Jesus was the Lord, the Son of God and the Saviour and worshipping him as the King of glory whereas under Roman law all worship was to be toward Caesar.

### **Rome and the Christian Titles, Lord, Son of God and Saviour.**

The titles, Lord, Son of God and Saviour were not pious terms in the first century, but titles of Caesar, when Christians were saying Jesus is Lord, Son of God and Saviour. Rome understood them to be taking the titles of Caesar and giving them to Jesus and so challenging the divine authority of the emperor.

### **The Caesars of Rome wanted to be known as a god.**

Roman Caesar Claiger AD 40 demanded grovelling worship and set himself in the Jewish Temple at Jerusalem, he was prepared to sacrifice the entire Jewish Nation for this worship. When Agrippa left Rome to rule his own country where to his subjects' surprise he presented himself as King, he put on a garment of woven silver and entered the theatre at day break, then when the sun's first rays touched his wondrous web of silver, Agrippa's flatterers immediately raised their voices addressing him as a god.

### **Rome and Religion.**

The Romans made a fundamental distinction between state religion and Roman religion. Roman state religion was considered the formal link between men and the gods. Their religion was seen as a type of contract between Rome and the highest god amongst all their gods. They held that their highest god would look after Rome's security and progress, providing the state looked after the god's needs by supplying the proper sacrifices and worship.

### **Paul and Silas are Beaten and Thrown into Prison.**

Acts 16:22-24 ----- <sup>22</sup>The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods <sup>23</sup>And when they had inflicted many blows upon them they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. <sup>24</sup>Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

The response of the crowd is horrific, they attack Paul and Silas and the judges tear their cloaks off them no-doubt so that they could have them brutally beaten until their flesh was bloody and bleeding before throwing them into prison.

## Paul's Attitude to Life.

Paul's eager expectation and hope was that he would with full courage always honour Christ in his body, whether by life or by death. To Paul to live, was to live for Christ and labour for him and death he considered would be gain for him so much so that he preferred to die and be with Christ.

Nevertheless though Paul considered death the best outcome for him he knew it would not be for the progress and joy in the faith of those remaining. The Gospel Paul proclaimed was not one of a charmed and prosperous life we know this because he encourages the Philippian church not to be frightened by their opponents because it has been granted to them that for the sake of Christ they should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake as Paul did (Philippians 1:20-30) and Peter says, "Let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good" (1 Peter 4:19).

**NOTICE:** the words, "The jailer was ordered to keep them safely" (v23) this does not mean he was to protect them from any harm while in prison, supporting this thought is the fact that the rulers had Paul and Silas brutally beaten clearly showing they did not care about their wellbeing. Rather the words, "Keep them safely" means make sure they cannot escape thus the reason the jailer made their feet secure in stocks (v24).

## A Great Earthquake releases Paul and Silas from Prison.

Acts 16:25-34 ----- <sup>25</sup>About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, <sup>26</sup>and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. <sup>27</sup>When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup>But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." <sup>29</sup>And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup>Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>31</sup>And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." <sup>32</sup>And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup>And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptised at once, he and all his family. <sup>34</sup>Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

The apostles and certain chosen men were greatly blessed with God's Spirit in a miraculous and stunning manner that no other generation before them or after them has been, because God was introducing the New Covenant, the Good News of the Gospel on all the world (meaning Jews and Gentiles alike), but to these appointed and chosen men's credit they were prepared to suffer rejection from their opponents and enormous cruelty and brutality to proclaim the word of the Lord.

Their bodies were beaten until they were bloody and bleeding (v33) and they were imprisoned not knowing if they would ever be released yet rather than give up in despair they continued to pray and sing songs of praise (v25) is it any wonder Christ chose them for such a great ministry.

**A Great Earthquake:** about midnight there was an earthquake so great the doors of the prison fell open and the chains of Paul and Silas were released. The Jailer knew he would be tortured or at least die a slow death if the prisoners had escaped so he preferred to kill himself quickly, but Paul stopped him. Obviously the jailer had heard the word of the Lord that the Paul and Silas had been proclaiming (most of the city had that's why they are in jail) so he falls at their feet saying: -

- What must I do to be saved?

They reply: -

- Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.

The jailer then takes them into his house (probably connected to the jail) and Paul and Silas share the Good News of the Gospel with his family after hearing the word of the Lord all believe and go out of the house to be water baptised (sometime between midnight and early morning) then the jailer, his wife and family (full of joy) take Paul and Silas back into their house and give them an early breakfast.

### **Water Baptism.**

Some today teach that after Christ's death and resurrection water baptism was done away with, but these verses clearly show that neither Paul nor Silas believed that to be true. Another teaching that this story shows to be false is the idea that it takes weeks to share the word of the Lord before a person is ready to be baptised. The jailers family clearly show that this thinking is also not true and that once a person repents and believes the Good News of the Gospel in Christ they are fit for Gods Kingdom and ready to be baptised.

**For further information see the title: -**

- Water Baptism (ON WEBSITE MENU).

### **The magistrates apologise to Paul and Silas and take them out of Prison.**

Acts 16:35-40 ----- <sup>35</sup>But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." <sup>36</sup>And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace." <sup>37</sup>But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out." <sup>38</sup>The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. <sup>39</sup>So they came and apologised to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup>So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

Morning arrives and the magistrates send police to the prison to let Paul and Silas go, but their surprise Paul refuses to leave the jail and instead tells the officers to tell their judges to come themselves and let them go. The magistrates feared because Roman citizens were protected by the laws of Rome so they out of fear and to protect themselves apologise to Paul and Silas and personally led them out of the prison while asking them to leave the city.

Paul and Silas visit Lydia encourage those who accepted the word of the Lord and then left the city of Philippi (a leading city of Macedonia and a Roman colony) (v12).

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End