

THE GOSPEL TO EUROPE

ACTS 16



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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel to Europe
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The Fellowship of Ailbe
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Introduction to Acts 16

The Gospel comes to Europe as Paul answers a call from the Lord to leave the work in Asia Minor and come over to Philippi, a Roman city in Greece.

Events there were dramatic, to say the least. But some came to Christ, a church was started, and Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke continued their ministry on Gentile soil.

We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Timothy

Pray Psalm 67.1-3.

God be merciful to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us,
Selab
That Your way may be known on earth,
Your salvation among all nations.
Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.

Sing Psalm 67.1-3.

(Solid Rock: [*My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*](#))

O bless us, Savior, by Your grace, and shine upon us with Your face,
that we Your way may loud proclaim and tell to all the earth Your fame!

Refrain v. 3

Let all the peoples praise You, Lord, rejoicing in Your holy Word,
rejoicing in Your holy Word!

Read and meditate on Acts 16.1-5.

Preparation

1. Who joined Paul in his ministry? Who was he?
2. What did Paul do on this part of his ministry?

Meditation

Paul headed out, letter from the Jerusalem council in hand, to inform the churches he founded on his first missionary journey concerning the council's directive. So what's the first thing we find him doing? Circumcising some guy! (v. 3)

Is Paul flouting the council? Has he thrown his lot in with the Judaizers? Not at all. Timothy is the "son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* Greek" (v. 1) And everyone who knew him, knew it. Obviously, his father had not felt the need to circumcise his son, but now this half-Jew would be ministering among Jews and Gentiles alike, and Paul was simply extrapolating the council's wisdom to make sure Timothy would not be a stumbling-block to either.

Together Paul and Timothy visited the churches founded on that first journey, sharing the directive of the council and strengthening the churches in the faith (v. 4). The result is that the ongoing work of Christ continued, and many people came to the Lord through the strengthened witness of the churches (v. 5). We note, by the way, that in verse 5 two verbs describe the churches: they were strengthened, and they increased in number. The ongoing work of Christ, we recall, was both to make disciples and build His Church, and this is precisely what we see Him doing here.

Often, the best place to train new leaders is during the work of ministry. This is what Jesus did, and Paul did this as well by enlisting Timothy as part of his ministry team.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Poor Timothy. There he was being a disciple of Christ's, well-spoken of by the brethren, working hard in his own Personal Mission Field. And then, Paul enters the scene and chooses him for a new assignment. Exciting

right? But there is one issue that needs attention before they set out. Timothy's enthusiasm is still peaked because he knows the decree that has been handed down concerning circumcision, so it couldn't be that. Or could it?

Paul has adopted a way of ministry for himself that he feels certain Timothy will also want to accept. And sure enough, this fine young man agreed this teaching was for the glory of Christ and for the good of the ministry. What was that teaching?

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you” (1 Cor. 9.19-23).

Timothy's response to Paul's suggestion is a beautiful example of following Jesus' command. Timothy set aside his own comfort for the salvation of others, and the glory of God.

And Jesus' command to all of us is this: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5.16). That we might by all means save some.

For reflection

1. What might it mean for you to set aside some of your comforts for the sake of the Gospel?
2. How did doing the work of ministry fit into Paul's approach to making disciples? What are the implications of this for you and your Personal Mission Field?
3. What did Paul mean by being “all things to all men, that I might by all means save some”? How should this guide our work in our Personal Mission Field?

“Timothy,” it says, “he wanted as his companion.” It is surprising that he even brought him along. “Because of the Jews,” it says, “that were in those places.” This is the reason for the circumcision. For they would not have endured to hear the Word from one uncircumcised. Nothing could be wiser. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 34

Pray Psalm 67.4-7.

Pray that the Gospel will continue to spread to all the nations of the world, that God would bless His people with boldness and zeal for evangelism, and that a great awakening to faith may occur in our generation.

Sing Psalm 67.4-7.

(Solid Rock: [My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less](#))

Let all the nations gladly sing and joyous praise before You bring.
You judge them by Your holy worth and guide the nations of the earth.

Refrain v. 3

Let all the peoples praise You, Lord, rejoicing in Your holy Word,
rejoicing in Your holy Word!

The earth in full its bounty yields – the blessed harvest of the fields.
We gather blessings from Your Word that all the earth may fear You, Lord.

Refrain v. 3

Let all the peoples praise You, Lord, rejoicing in Your holy Word,
rejoicing in Your holy Word!

2 The Leading of the Spirit

Pray Psalm 2.7, 8.

“I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.”

Sing Psalm 2.7, 8.

(Agincourt: *O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High*)

Proclaim the message far and wide, that God has exalted the Crucified!
From heav’n He sent us His only Son, Who has for us salvation won!

Read Acts 16.1-10; meditate on verses 6-10.

Preparation

1. Where was Paul trying to go?
2. What happened to him to change his plans?

Meditation

Paul decided to press on to the west or north. He wanted to preach the Gospel beyond where he’d already been – his perpetual wont (2 Cor. 10.15, 16), but he encountered difficulty determining where he ought to go. The Spirit did not allow him to go where he wanted, whether to Asia (in the southeast) or Bithynia. We don’t know how the Spirit made that known. What we do see, however, is Paul’s intense sensitivity to the leading of the Spirit.

Paul received a vision from the Lord of a man urging him to come over to Macedonia, on the European continent, to help folks there. Five centuries later a similar vision would send an escaped British slave named Patrick back to Ireland to be used of God in launching the Celtic Revival (ca 430-800 AD). Sometimes, as God sees fit, such visions are necessary for the ongoing work of Christ.

We note in verse 10 the sudden and unexpected use of the pronoun, “we.” Luke has joined Paul’s team. Did he come from Macedonia to intercept Paul? Did Luke bring the vision of going to Macedonia? Or did he simply run into Paul along the way somewhere? We don’t know. But now our writer begins recording events first hand.

In 333 BC, Alexander the Great crossed the Bosphorus from Macedonia to Troy with 50,000 skilled soldiers and a vision of the world under Greek rule. Within 11 years he was dead, and his empire was divided and in decline. Paul and his small troop crossed the Bosphorus from Troy to Macedonia with a vision of the Kingdom of God and the resources of God’s Word and Spirit. The rest is history. What vision guides your Christian life? On what resources do you depend for doing the ongoing work of the Lord?

The ongoing work of Christ now begins on the continent of Europe – from Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, the witnesses of the Lord are truly reaching the uttermost parts of the earth.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The leading of the Holy Spirit is a dear and precious gift that has been given to us, His children.

“For this is God, our God forever and ever;
He will be our guide even to death” (Ps. 48.14).

“To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace”
(Lk. 1.79).

“...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (Jn. 16.13, 14).

*Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
hold me with Thy pow’rful hand;
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more,
feed me till I want no more.*

(William Williams, 1745/John Hughes, 1907)

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (Rom. 8.14).

For reflection

1. How do you know when the Holy Spirit is leading you to do something?
2. Paul always worked with teams. How important is it that you should have a prayer partner or mission partner to encourage you in your work in your Personal Mission Field?
3. Today, pray the hymn provided above to help prepare you for going into your Personal Mission Field. Sing it throughout the day, as you have opportunity.

We must follow Providence: and whatever we seek to do, if that suffer us not, we ought to submit and believe to be for the best. People greatly need help for their souls, it is their duty to look out for it, and to invite those among them who can help them. And God’s calls must be complied with readily. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 6.6-15*

Pray Psalm 2.9-12.

Pray for a worldwide revival among the churches of the Lord, and for a renewal of our witness. Pray that God will open the hearts of multitudes in every nation to worship and serve Him.

Sing Psalm 2.9-12.

(Agincourt: *O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High*)

To Christ the Lord be given all who humbly embrace Him and on Him call.
Be wise, be warned: His judgment comes to break the prideful, sinful ones.

Rejoice with fear in Jesus’ grace, and worship before His exalted face!
Beware His anger and judgment grim: How blessed are all who rest in Him!

3 Same Song, Next Verse

Pray Psalm 66.1-4.

Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!
Sing out the honor of His name;
Make His praise glorious.
Say to God,
“How awesome are Your works!
Through the greatness of Your power
Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.
All the earth shall worship You
And sing praises to You;
They shall sing praises *to* Your name.”
Selah

Sing Psalm 66.1-4.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Shout for joy to God, all people, sing the glory of His Name!
Give Him glorious praise and say, “How great Your pow’r and great Your fame!
All the earth shall worship gladly as they praise Your glorious Name!”

Read Acts 16.1-15; meditate on verses 11-15.

Preparation

1. Where did Paul and his team go in Philippi?
2. Whom did they meet there?

Meditation

Paul and his team determined to bring the Gospel, first, to the people they considered most likely to be open to hearing it – those who already believed in and practiced prayer. There being no synagogue in Philippi, Paul sought out a place where people would be praying. Then, same song, next verse: The ongoing work of Christ goes on, just as He’d promised.

Lydia was a woman who worshiped God. This suggests she was a Jew or had some contact with Jews. As a businesswoman, her contacts doubtless ranged beyond her own city of Thyatira (on the Asian mainland, where synagogues were plentiful, as we have seen), and she may have made it her practice to join Jews at worship in various places. She was the one most open to the Gospel; and when she heard it, she believed and was baptized, together with her entire household, who were with her in Philippi.

She immediately showed the effects of the Gospel on her life by opening her home to Paul and his companions, insisting they make their abode with her while they remained in Philippi. So the first evidence here of the work of the Spirit is not speaking in tongues, as in previous situations, but hospitality – love for the brethren. True faith produces spiritual evidence (Heb. 11.1).

The ongoing work of Christ proceeds in small increments, typically, one person at a time. Faithful witnesses, like Paul, look for opportunities to engage others in conversation about spiritual matters, whether to strengthen them in their faith or to explore the possibilities for sharing the Gospel. We should imitate him in this practice, so that the ongoing work of Jesus can continue in and through us (1 Cor. 11.1).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Worship can happen anyplace. It does not necessarily have to take place in a church building. These women of Philippi were gathered by the riverside where prayer was customarily made (Acts 16.13).

Jesus taught His disciples that “where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matt. 18.20). Anywhere.

If all the earth is worshipping God and singing praises to Him, then that is happening everywhere (Pss. 66.4; 148). Not just inside a building.

The wise men from the East, who were following the star to find the Child Jesus, were planning to “worship Him” whenever and wherever they found Him (Matt. 2.2). Not just inside a cathedral.

When the Lord returns, He plans to have a huge meeting of His elect: “Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven” (Mk. 13.26, 27). No building ever made by men will be able to handle that crowd!

But until that great Day of gathering we must content ourselves to worship Him in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4.24). In all the areas of our life, every moment, and in every way. (Building not included.)

Of course, we do worship together in buildings also. A time to lift our voices together in praise and thankfulness to Him, Who loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2.20). A time to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...but exhorting one another, and so much more” as we see the Day approaching (Heb. 10.24, 25).

*[O worship the King, all glorious above,](#)
O gratefully sing His pow'r and His love;
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.
(William Kethe, 1561)*

Building not required. And maybe even happening down by the riverside.

For reflection

1. What does it mean to worship God? Why can we worship Him anywhere, and not just in a building?
2. God must open the heart of everyone who will believe. We can't do that. But what *is* our duty?
3. What is hospitality? How can hospitality be a means of grace? How should you practice hospitality in your Personal Mission Field?

As an artisan in purple dyes, Lydia was a wealthy woman who had come to Philippi to practice her trade. Paul preached the gospel, but the Lord opened Lydia's heart to it. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Note on Acts 16.14

Pray Psalm 66.5-9, 13-20.

Use this psalm to renew your own commitment as a witness for the Lord (Acts 1.8). Whom will you see today? Whether they are believers or unbelievers, ask God to give you a word of witness to share with them. Thank Him for the grace that empowers you as an ambassador for His Kingdom.

Sing Psalm 66.5-9, 13-20.

(Regent Square: Angels from the Realms of Glory)

The Gospel to Europe: Acts 16

Great and awesome is our Savior in the works which He has done.
He the sea and river dried to let His people cross as one.
Then our joy was great to worship Him our mighty, sovereign One.

He the nations watches ever – all you rebels, humbled be.
Bless our God, all men and nations, praise His Name eternally!
He preserves our souls, and He will keep His paths beneath our feet.

To Your house we come with offsprings, what we vowed, Lord, help us do.
O, receive our praise and homage as we give ourselves to You.
Come and listen, all who fear Him: hear what this great God can do!

When we cried to You, You answered, filled our mouths with highest praise.
Let not sin abide within us, lest we languish all our days.
Bless the Lord, Who hears our pleadings and preserves His love always.

4 Not All Publicity is Good Publicity

Pray Psalm 12.1, 2.

Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases!
For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.
They speak idly everyone with his neighbor;
With flattering lips *and* a double heart they speak.

Sing Psalm 12.1, 2.

(Hamburg: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*)

Help, Lord! The godly cease to be! They who believe in Christ are few.
Falsely the wicked confidently flatter, deceive, and mock Your truth.

Read Acts 16.1-18; meditate on verses 16-18.

Preparation

1. What was this girl doing?
2. What did Paul do?

Meditation

Back in the 1970s, when TV evangelists were as ubiquitous as reality shows are today, Malcolm Muggeridge, the esteemed British journalist and late convert to Christ, wrote a book entitled, *Christ and the Media*. In it he argued that, had TV existed in the Roman Empire of Jesus' day, and had Jesus been offered a weekly one-hour, prime-time slot to do whatever He wanted, to be shown throughout the Roman world, Jesus would have declined. TV, Muggeridge explained, is associated with what is *not real*. TV is a medium for *entertainment* and *advertising*, not for representing *truth*.

Most people understood in Paul's day that all forms of divination and fortune-telling were either bogus or demon-inspired. Some may have believed them, but mostly they were fun, crowd-pleasing, and maybe a little mysterious, but ultimately folly. Yet this little girl was proclaiming the truth! What could be the harm in that? Didn't this represent a great opportunity?

Paul would have nothing to do with it. The Gospel is true, pure, and holy, not some gimmick to be hawked or paraded huckster-like or in merely pragmatic, culture-friendly ways. So he delivered the little girl from her demon (Greek: *python*) and preserved the integrity of the Gospel. He was only doing what Jesus had done. Whenever demons tried to speak in His presence, He typically would tell them to "Shut up and get out!"

Well done, Paul! Well, sort of. The problem Paul created was not of a religious sort. It was pure economics. The men who owned this poor child were making money off her hand-over-fist. Paul's refusal to go along with the show put an end to that.

The Gospel is the truth of God, and those who live and proclaim it must be ready to guard and defend it against every adversary or cheap imitation. Paul had to confront this situation openly and boldly so that his work of preaching would not be compromised. We must be prepared to do the same.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Demons are not always fire-breathing dragons or disastrously obvious creatures. They can be subtle, dabbling in the truth, and in seemingly harmless vessels.

Not unlike this “slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination.” (Acts 16.16) Her skill set, straight from the father of lies, was the ability to tell fortunes. The Old Testament dealt harshly with this: “You shall not permit a sorceress to live” (Ex. 22.18). And Paul lists it in his writings as ungodly behavior: “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5.19-21).

Even in Paul’s annoyance he was doing a work of mercy, as he was ridding her of behavior that would keep her from experiencing life in the Kingdom.

As we look at the works of the flesh that Paul lists, are there any items that we find lurking in our own lives? We might not be fortune-tellers, but do we ever experience outbursts of wrath? How about envy?

Do we need a purging of our own hearts, like the girl in our reading today?

Happily, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and He helps us contend with the principalities, powers, rulers of darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness that we daily war against (Eph. 6.12).

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness...”

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Ps. 51.1, 2, 7, 10)

When we confess the sin (1 Jn. 1.9) that so easily ensnares us (Heb. 12.1), we will experience the same relief that the fortune-teller did: it will come out of us this very hour! (Acts 16.18)

For reflection

1. In Ephesians 5.15-17, Paul indicates there is no middle ground between serving the Lord and serving evil. How can you make sure you’re always using your time for Jesus and His Kingdom?
2. Why is it important that we declare the Gospel out of holy and loving lives?
3. What believers will you encourage to live boldly for the Lord today? How?

Satan, though the father of lies, will declare the most important truths, when he can thereby serve his purposes. But much mischief is done to the real servants of Christ, by unboly and false preachers of the gospel... Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 16.16-24

Pray Psalm 12.5-7.

Pray that God will deliver His Church from all gimmicks and merely human devices or means, and cause us to rely on God alone, and on living and proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Sing Psalm 12.5-7.

(Hamburg: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*)

The Gospel to Europe: Acts 16

Rise up, O Lord, and rescue all Your precious children sore distressed.
Save those who faithfully on You call; grant them deliv'rance, peace, and rest.

Your words are pure and proven true, like silver seven times refined;
You will preserve Your Word ever new, and keep the heart to You inclined.

5 Slandered, Beaten, Jailed, Singing

Pray Psalm 54.1-3.

Save me, O God, by Your name,
And vindicate me by Your strength.
Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.
For strangers have risen up against me,
And oppressors have sought after my life;
They have not set God before them.
Selah

Sing Psalm 54.1-3.

(Beatitudo: [*Father of Mercies, in Your Word*](#))

Save us, O God, by Your great Name; vindicate us with power.
Answer our prayer, remove our shame, in this our desperate hour.

Strangers and foes against us rise, threatening woe and strife.
They have not set You in their eyes, but seek to take our life.

Read Acts 16.1-30; meditate on verses 19-30.

Preparation

1. What happened to Paul and Silas?
2. How did they respond?

Meditation

As we might have expected, the owners of this now demon-free little girl became irate at Paul's having brought their little gambit to an abrupt end. So they dragged him and Silas before the local authorities and trumped up some half-truth to get even with them (v. 19).

As the crowd heated up (v. 22), the magistrates stripped and beat Paul and Silas with rods and threw them in jail – no hearing, no trial, no opportunity to explain themselves (vv. 23, 24). What would you and I have done? Probably sulked in our cell and feared what tomorrow might bring. Perhaps we would have prayed, but the prayers would have been for our safety and wellbeing, I suspect. Paul and Silas? They sang (v. 25).

God's thunderous, earth-shaking response to the singing of Paul and Silas was a resounding indication of His approval of their faith (v. 26). The jailer prepared to kill himself because that would have been easier than the punishment he expected from the Romans (cf. Acts 12.19). Paul stayed his hand, however, and the jailer fell down before him with that classic question: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (vv. 27, 28)

It does not please the Lord for His evangelists to be supplied with "earthquake in a jar" to set people up for the Gospel. It pleases Him for us to live by faith and to respond in faith and rejoicing to all the outward circumstances of our lives, be they ever so dire. Paul and Silas were singing about the salvation they possessed and they longed for others to know. God moved heaven and earth to reach one man and his household with the Good News of salvation (vv. 29, 30).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul and Silas were falsely accused. Beaten. Bloodied. And locked with their feet fastened in the stocks. In a dark prison (Acts 16.23, 24). And to show their complete rage with all this injustice and pain, they were praying and singing hymns to God (Acts 16.25). Typical behavior? I think not.

In fact, the astounding thing is, the jailer's question. Mainly what it wasn't. It was not, "Where can I get the same lawyer?" Or, "Tell me again your plan for retaliation."

No. Paul and Silas had so proclaimed the message and power of Jesus Christ by their response to this situation, that the first question the jailer had was: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Their attitude, their demeanor, their courage, and their joy screamed that they lived in another realm. One that was inhabited by them with their Savior, Jesus Christ.

Do our lives scream the same thing?

"I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope" (Ps. 16.8, 9).

"I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end" (Ps. 119.112).

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink," [or are stuck in some loathsome prison], "or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10.31).

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2.10).

"See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess. 5.15-18).

If we truly believe the words of Scripture, and we live accordingly, then our lives too, will scream that we live for the Savior. So that when we are slandered, beaten, or jailed, we also will be singing!

And then observants will ask us, "What must I do to be saved?"

For reflection

1. What do we learn from Paul and Silas about dealing with trials and adversity?
2. In what ways is it clear to the people in your Personal Mission Field that you dwell in another realm?"
3. Whom can you encourage today to trust in the Lord and rest in the joy of their salvation?

No trouble, however grievous, should hinder us from praise. Christianity proves itself to be of God, in that it obliges us to be just to our own lives. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 16.25-34*

Pray Psalm 54.4-7.

Pray for persecuted believers around the world. Call on the Lord to help and uphold them, and to give them strength to persevere amid their trials as followers of and witness to Jesus.

Sing Psalm 54.4-7.

(Beatitude: [*Father of Mercies, in Your Word*](#))

The Gospel to Europe: Acts 16

You are the Helper of our soul; You will sustain and bless.
Recompense evil to our foe in Your great faithfulness.

Willingly will we praise You, Lord, gladly adore Your Name!
You have redeemed us by Your Word and blessed us by the same.

From all our trouble, by Your grace, You have redeemed us, Lord.
While all our foes in sad disgrace reel backward from Your Word.

6 The Gospel and Public Policy

Pray Psalm 146.1, 2, 10.

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

While I live I will praise the LORD;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being...

The LORD shall reign forever—

Your God, O Zion, to all generations.

Praise the LORD!

Sing Psalm 146.1, 2, 10.

(Hallelujah! What a Savior!: *Man of Sorrows*)

Praise the Lord, my soul, give praise! While I live, His Name I'll raise!

And exalt Him all my days – God forever reigns in Zion!

Read Acts 16.1-40; meditate on verses 31-40.

Preparation

1. What happened to the Philippian jailer?

2. What happened to Paul and Silas?

Meditation

The jailer probably lived at the jail, perhaps in an adjoining apartment – one of the perks of the job. He had a family, and Paul's response to his desperate question indicated that the grace of God would reach through the faith of the jailer to embrace all those within his household (v. 31). We can almost *feel* the rejoicing all around. Paul's and Silas' hymn/prayer had been answered right in front of their eyes, and a family of lost souls found a new and eternal reason to live and love (vv. 32-34). The coming of the Kingdom is the coming of *joy* (Rom. 14.17, 18).

Paul and Silas spent the rest of the night in jail. Why did they choose to continue to submit to injustice? Probably for the sake of the jailer and his family. They continued to suffer indignity so that their brethren would not suffer death.

The city had quieted down by morning, so the magistrates sent the cops over to tell the jailer to let Paul and Silas go (v. 35). Now the fun begins. It was public policy in Roman cities to act pragmatically at times rather than always follow the letter of the law. Roman magistrates had a good bit of power to ignore law when order was at stake. That was public policy.

Paul rejected Roman pragmatism. He would stand by the *written public policy* of Roman government, namely, that you don't beat and jail Roman citizens without first trying, hearing, and formally condemning them. No. He would not go. Let them come and make nice to him (vv. 37, 38). Let them be humbled by their own breach of Roman policy and their own terror of the law they so freely abused, just to maintain order in their town.

Can you see these magistrates, hats in hands, heads bowed, pleading and asking the apostles to move on (vv. 38, 39)? Does the Gospel have power? It certainly emboldened Paul to enter the public policy arena, challenge local practice, and insist on justice. And it humbled those who in their hearts knew he was right and

they were wrong. Paul and Silas did not immediately leave the city (v. 40). First, they had to attend to the needs of the brethren. Do you suppose the strength they had shown made an impact on the Philippian believers? Paul and Silas would leave Philippi, but on the timetable of their Kingdom agenda.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We have so much to learn about how to behave. We think there should be “pat answers” to everything we do or say. But there are not. We need the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth (Jn. 16.13).

We might have thought that the “Christian” thing for Paul and Silas to do would have been to skulk away; ever so grateful that their lives had been spared. But as a matter of public policy, and a teachable moment for the Church, he demanded that the Roman law be followed and that due respect and repentance be paid to him, a Roman citizen.

Life, and our behavior in it as Christians, depend on the wisdom of God to help us live correctly. Each situation we find ourselves in bears thinking about and searching out godly wisdom, to manage our way through it.

First and foremost, though, is we must never do anything contrary to God’s Law. But as we see in this situation with Paul and Silas, they could have chosen a multitude of ways to respond; and by the Holy Spirit’s leading, they chose this one.

I had a Bible study teacher who used to say that she loved being a steering wheel in the hands of the Holy Spirit; going however, whenever, and wherever the Lord led her. She would seek His face in each situation, looking for His wisdom and guidance; first, of course, for her own life, and then to help others. It was a learning experience to watch how the Lord, Whom she loved most of all, would lead and guide her. I learned that this way of life is possible. And that is exactly what Paul and Silas were teaching those that were watching them.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9.10).

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (Jms. 1.5).

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (Jms. 3.17).

Christians are called to behave righteously. How that plays out in each situation might vary. But righteousness and keeping the Law are paramount.

“In the way of righteousness is life...” (Prov. 12.28).

“He who follows righteousness and mercy finds life, righteousness, and honor” (Prov.21.21).

“...those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5.17).

“If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him” (1 Jn. 2.29)

With God’s wisdom, and a heart set on following His Law (Ps. 119.112), we will have a much better idea of how to respond in each and every situation that comes our way for the Gospel, and public policy.

For reflection

1. What does it mean to “be filled” with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5.18-21)? How can you be filled like this?

2. What does it mean to “walk” in the Spirit (Gal. 5.16 ff.)? How can you walk more consistently in the Spirit?
3. What is the role of Scripture in helping us to discern the Spirit’s leading in any situation?

*Paul, though willing to suffer for the cause of Christ, and without any desire to avenge himself, did not choose to depart under the charge of having deserved wrongful punishment, and therefore required to be dismissed in an honorable manner. It was not a mere point of honor that the apostle stood upon, but justice, and not to himself so much as to his cause. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 16.35-40**

Pray Psalm 146.3-10.

Call on the Lord to help you today in everything you do. Hope in Him and rejoice in His strength. Let the creation around you bear witness to His power. Be alert to every opportunity to serve someone in need.

Sing Psalm 146.3-10.

(Hallelujah! What a Savior!: *Man of Sorrows*)

Trust we not in prince or man – no salvation’s in their hand.

Death shall take them, breath and plans – God forever reigns in Zion!

Blessed are they whose hope resides in the Lord, Christ at His side.

By Him heav’n and earth abide – God forever reigns in Zion!

He is faithful evermore; He gives justice to the poor,
feeds the hungry from His store – God forever reigns in Zion!

Jesus sets the pris’ner free, heals blind eyes that they may see,
lifts those burdened painfully – God forever reigns in Zion!

He the righteous loves the best; wand’rers in His grace are blessed;
needy ones in Him find rest – God forever reigns in Zion!

But the wicked who defame His eternal blessèd Name,
them He brings to ruin and shame – God forever reigns in Zion!

7 Ongoing and Unstoppable

Pray Psalm 96.1-4.

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.
Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples.
For the LORD *is* great and greatly to be praised;
He *is* to be feared above all gods.

Sing Psalm 96.1-4.

(Mit Freuden Zart: [All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above](#))

Sing to the Lord! O, bless His Name! All nations tell His glory!
Salvation's tidings loud proclaim; let earth rehearse His story!
For God is greatly to be praised; His throne above all gods is raised –
fear Him, and sing His glory!

Read Acts 16.1-40; meditate on verses 18 and 19.

Preparation

1. How did Paul cast out the demon from the little girl?
2. How did he lead the Philippian jailor to salvation?

Meditation

The lack of a permanent building can't stop the ongoing work of Christ (Acts 16.11-15). The devil in his wiles is helpless against it (vv. 16-18). The attempts of angry men to put a stop to the Gospel collapse in a heap before the power of the Lord (vv. 19-26). In the face of all opposition, the ongoing work of Christ goes on, reaching the souls of earnest seekers and readied pagans, overcoming the threats and schemes of powerful men, and strengthening and encouraging those who believe and have been saved (v. 40).

Everywhere the Gospel went in the book of Acts, nothing could stand against it. The ministry of the Word and the proclamation of the Kingdom are powerful against every foe to accomplish God's purpose of bringing His Kingdom to earth as it is in heaven, in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18).

In our day, the progress of the Gospel seems almost to have ground to a halt. Is this because the Gospel has lost its power to save (Rom. 1.16, 17)? Is it because the Kingdom has realized all that the Lord intends (Hab. 2.14)? Or is it because we have lost our vision for a world turned upside-down for Jesus, our resolve to live as His witnesses, and our confidence in His Word and Spirit; and we have decided to embrace a merely "good enough" salvation while we continue to pursue the idols and diversions of the world of things?

The Gospel has not changed. But we are not a people like Paul and Silas. Like Luke and Timothy. Even like Lydia and the Philippian jailer. We don't see the urgency of the Gospel. We don't believe that all people need to be saved. We have lost sight of the fact that a day of judgment is coming. And we have become comfortable in our non-threatening way of being Christians.

Which Paul would question as to whether we are really Christians at all (2 Cor. 13.5).

Pray that we will recover our true understanding of the Gospel, undiluted love for Jesus, and our proper place in the ongoing and unstoppable work of our Lord.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

As we pray to recover our true understanding of the Gospel, we would do well to rehearse how we came to be Christians in the first place: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2.8, 9). Yes, Paul, we agree with every word!

Now, why were we saved through faith? It must be for some purpose? Well, yes. I’m glad you asked. Paul continues, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2.10). Well, yes, I see that. That is the reason for this great salvation!

So let’s bolster our resolve and say with the Israelites of old: “All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go” (Josh. 1.16). Ongoing and unstoppable.

And let’s agree with the psalmist and say: “LORD, I hope for Your salvation, and I do Your commandments. My soul keeps Your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly. I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways are before You” (Ps. 119. 166-168). Ongoing and unstoppable.

Finally, let’s hear what Jesus says to us: “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” And, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (Jn. 14.15; 15.12, 14). Ongoing and unstoppable.

What better way to show God that we love Him, than by keeping His commandments, and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, with everyone in our Personal Mission Field? It is our purpose and our calling. Those good works that were created beforehand for us, that we should do.

Ongoing and unstoppable? Only by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Because, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19.26).

For reflection

1. Would you describe the ongoing work of Jesus in your life as “unstoppable?” Explain.
2. How do you expect the unstoppable, ongoing work of Christ to affect the people in your Personal Mission Field?
3. Knowing that the ongoing work of Christ is unstoppable, how should we as believers encourage one another? Whom will you encourage today?

Such were the beginnings of the preaching in Macedonia. Either gain or ambition or superstition is always at war with the gospel, but when the world rages most fiercely against the members of Christ, then especially is the solace of heaven at hand to help.
Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), *Paraphrase of Acts 16:24, 8*

Pray Psalm 96.5-13,

Pray for the ongoing and unstoppable work of our Lord Jesus Christ – in your life, your Personal Mission Field, your church and community, and throughout the world. Thank the Lord for His mercy and grace, and rejoice that He is coming soon to take us to Himself forever.

Sing Psalm 98.5-13.

(Mit Freuden Zart: [*All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above*](#))

All other gods are idols vain; the Lord created heaven.
Splendor and strength with Him obtain; to Him is glory given!
All fam'lies, praise this mighty Lord! Give strength and glory to His Word;
exalt the Lord of heaven.

Bring off'rings sweet to Him, our Lord, in holy garments praise Him!
Tremble before Him, all the earth; among the nations raise Him!
The earth is fixed, it will not move; the peoples will His justice prove.
Exalt the Lord and praise Him.

Let heaven sing with lusty voice; let earth and sea sing sweetly!
Let fields and trees in Him rejoice, for He is coming swiftly
to judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in His faithfulness.
He comes; exalt Him greatly!

The Gospel to Europe: Acts 16

For reflection or discussion

1. How can we discern the leading of God's Spirit? Where and how would you expect Him to lead you?
2. What sacrifice did Timothy make to ensure he could work among Jews? What sacrifices is God calling you to make to work your Personal Mission Field?
3. How were Paul and Silas able to sing to the Lord in the midst of their suffering?
4. What next steps for working your Personal Mission Field can you derive from our study of this section of Acts?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 16?

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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