

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 52

I. Exposition of Chapter Sixteen (continued).

A. Verses 16-24 – A girl delivered from a demon and Paul and Silas arrested.

1. Verse 16 – **“Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.”**

- a. **“...possessed with a spirit of divination...”** – This young slave girl was not only in bondage to men but also in bondage to this demon. Stanly Horton writes:

“Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke continued going to ‘the place of prayer’ regularly. One day a demon possessed slave girl met them on the way there. The Greek says she had a spirit of ventriloquism; that is, a demon spirit controlled her, speaking through her and practicing fortune-telling. The Greek also calls her a “pythoness.” The python was the symbol of the Greek god Apollo: Her masters claimed that her fortune-telling was the voice of Apollo. This kind of fortune-telling (Gk. *manteuomenē*, “giving of oracles”) brought much money to her masters. It may be implied also that they used her to attract people to other businesses they carried on.”¹

- b. We might wonder, can demons tell the future? Demons are created beings, not created as they are, but are now fallen beings. They cannot read minds but they know human behavior and can certainly steer events in order so they appear to have been supernaturally predicted.

2. Verses 17-18 – **“This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.’ And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And he came out that very hour.”** – The demon possessing this girl knew who Paul and his company were and even though what the spirit was saying about them was true, the way in which it was being conveyed was probably scaring people away from them. Finally, after **“many days”** of this girl following then around, Paul was **“...greatly annoyed...”** This means Paul was: **“strongly irked or provoked at something or someone—...to become angry.”²**

- a. Paul responds to the demon and makes a command – **“I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.”** The name **“Jesus”** means; **“Jehovah, the Savior”**. From the above we could also say that **“Jesus”** means; **“The Self-Existent One Who Sets Free, Delivers, Rescues, Brings Salvation and Victory”**.

- b. Jesus gave the church His Name, and the authority behind it, in order to represent Him on the earth and to carry out the Great Commission - **Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20. (cf. also Acts 3:6-10; 16)**

3. Verses 19-21 – The **“masters”** or owners of this slave girl saw that they could no longer profit from the girl’s divination. This shows that the demon definitely departed from the girl. This demonstrates again how the **“love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (I Timothy 6:10)**.
4. Verses 22-24 – **Paul and Silas beaten and thrown into prison.** It’s unclear as to why Luke and Timothy were not taken as well. It could be because Paul and Silas were the primary speakers. This was one of the three beatings Paul referred to in **II Corinthians 11:25**. The **“jailer”** was probably a retired military man who was expected to follow orders and use any military skills needed in dealing with prisoners.³

B. Verses 25-34 - Supernatural Deliverance and the Philippian Jailer Saved.

1. Verse 25 – **“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”** – Here we have two men who have been beaten with rods many times, no doubt they were in much pain with blood dripping down their backs. Not only this, but they had been placed into the dark inner prison and their feet were in stocks. Yet, in the midst of it all, they began to pray and sing to the Lord!

¹Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 283.

²Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 762.

³Richard N. Longenecker, "Acts," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 260.

a. **“...and the prisoners were listening to them.”** – The word **“listening”** here means; **“to listen with pleasure,”⁴ as if listening to beautiful music.”**

b. Regarding the prisoners listening, Dr. Bob Utley states:

“It is possible that the theological content of these prayers and hymns caused the prisoners to faith in Christ (i.e. “the prisoners were listening to them”) because none of the prisoners escaped when the earthquake opened the doors (cf. vv. 26, 28, “we are all here”)...These down-and-out prisoners eagerly heard and responded to a message of God’s love, care, and acceptance!”⁵

c. Later, in Paul’s letter to the Philippian believers, he would exhort them to **“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).**

2. **Verse 26 – “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 chains were loosed.”**

a. There is little doubt that part of the prayer that Paul and Silas prayed had to do with asking for deliverance from this situation they probably weren’t expecting an earthquake.

b. Paul also taught the Philippians that we are to pray **“...with thanksgiving...”** which is indicative of faith. **(Philippians 4:6).** Stanley Toussaint writes:

“This supernatural deliverance reminds the reader of the parallel experiences of Peter (cf. 5:18–20; 12:3–11). This was certainly an unusual midnight experience in a prison—the earth quaking, the prison shaking, doors flying open ... chains falling off.”⁶

3. **Verse 27 – “And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.”** – It seems the prisoners were so stunned by the supernatural deliverance, they didn’t try to flee. Thomas Constable states:

“This jailer was about to commit suicide, and so avoid the shame of a public execution. He was certain his prisoners ‘had escaped.’ God had restrained the other prisoners from escaping somehow, possibly out of fear or out of respect for Paul and Silas.”⁷

4. **Verse 28 – “But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.’”** Paul had a love and compassion for the jailer. He recognized that it was really the jailer who was the prisoner and wanted to help him know the way of salvation.

5. **Verses 29-34 – The Jailer and his household get saved.**

a. **Verse 30 – “...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”** – Somehow, the jailer must have heard enough of their message to know there was a need to be saved. It could have been through what was proposed earlier – the praises they sang to God.

b. **Verse 31 – “So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”** – This is the simple answer. Some people believe this is too easy but it’s placing faith in God’s grace alone that saves. Some also wonder why Paul didn’t tell him to repent of his sins. It seems apparent that the man was already expressing an attitude of repentance.

1) **“...you and your household.”** – This is NOT a promise that everyone who gets saved can expect their entire family to be saved! Everyone has free will and you can’t pull this verse out and make this idea a doctrine. It’s simply saying that the way for the jailer and his whole household to be saved is by believing on the Lord Jesus.

c. **Verses 32-34** – In this instance the whole family did believe and were all baptized and they became part of the Church in Philippi who Paul would later write to.

⁴*Nelson Study Bible*, Earl D. Radmacher, gen.ed. (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1997), 1740.

⁵Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 196.

⁶Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 400.

⁷Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 331-332.