

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### PRISON (ACTS 16:16-24)

#### A SPIRIT THAT HELPED PREDICT THE FUTURE

One day as Paul and the team were heading to pray, a demon-possessed, fortune telling "slave girl" started following them and mocking them for "many days."

- "The Python," a mythical Greek serpent, was believed to protect the temple of Apollo. Fortune tellers were considered possessed with a "pythian spirit."

#### THIS MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE A SCENE

"Pythian spirit" was also used for ventriloquists, so one can imagine the ruckus this demonically possessed girl was causing. It's also interesting that she was speaking a truth; they were "servants of the Most High God."

- "Most High God" was also a term for Zeus. **Demons know the truth of Christ (James 2:19), but their aim is to confuse.**

#### THE POINT WAS TO DISTRACT AND CONFUSE

Since she was speaking truth about who the missionaries were, why not embrace it? Well, the possessed girl was distracting the people by drawing more attention to herself than to the mission of Christ.

- **Sometimes we say the right thing but with selfish and evil motives. This distracts others from the gospel.**

#### PAUL WAS "GREATLY ANNOYED"

Because Paul didn't want people to lose focus of the gospel he was teaching, Paul turned to the possessed woman and said, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" This was not like cinematic exorcisms.

- **Paul simply used his spiritual authority and the demon "came out right away."**

#### SOME PEOPLE WERE PROFITING FROM THIS GIRL

The owners of the slave girl found out that the "pythian spirit" had been exorcised out, and they were outraged because she was their main source of income.

- The owners "seized" Paul and Silas and took them to the magistrates to be punished for upsetting the **Pax Romana** and teaching illegal religious views.

#### THEY REALLY DIDN'T CARE ABOUT THE RELIGION

Roman areas were actually extremely tolerant with freedom of religion, but citizens would be irrationally violent when their income and way of life was affected.

- Sounds a little like American culture today. **We tend to only care when our convenience and pocket books are disrupted.**

#### LUKE AND TIMOTHY WEREN'T ARRESTED

We see some anti-Semitism in the fact that only the Jews of the group were arrested. Not only arrested, but they were going to experience Roman justice.

- As the crowd's anger grew, the men were flogged and thrown into prison without any trial or chance to defend themselves.

### MIDNIGHT (ACTS 16:25-34)

#### A HIGHLIGHT OF THE ENTIRE NEW TESTAMENT

As Paul and Silas sit in a prison at the darkest part of the night, they begin to sing worship songs and pray aloud. Not only that, the prisoners around them listened.

- **In the darkest hours, even when we don't know what the outcome will be, the true Christian prays and worships.**

#### DELIVERANCE COMES THROUGH RELATIONSHIP

As the men prayed and sang, "Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundation of the jail was shaken...the doors were opened, and everyone's chains came loose."

- Not only were Paul and Silas delivered, so were the people around them! **Prayer doesn't just affect us, it changes the whole environment!**

#### A NEAR SUICIDE

The guard wakes up and realizes that the doors were opened and assumes the prisoners had fled. Because Roman soldiers took on the punishment of escaped prisoners, the guard proceeded to kill himself in fear of what would happen to him.

- Fortunately, Paul called out "we're all here!"

#### "THE JAILER CALLED FOR LIGHTS..."

It must have been God that Paul and Silas could persuade all the prisoners to not escape. But when the guard ran in, everyone was accounted for.

- After escorting them out the jailer humbles himself and asks, **"What must I do to be saved?"**

#### THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION

The guard had escaped death from the quake and suicide; now he wanted to escape eternal death. There were 3 attitudes he displayed to be saved:

1. **He recognized he needed help.**
2. **He was aware Jesus was the Savior.**

### 3. He responded to the Gospel.

#### "BELIEVE IN JESUS AND YOU WILL BE SAVED"

Paul and Silas immediately directed the guard to Jesus Christ. It didn't stop there though they "spoke the word of the Lord to him along with everyone in his house." After the jailer washed their wounds, they baptized him and his family.

- Believing is the launching pad, not the conclusion of our faith!

#### IT WAS AN INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE

All the people in the household were not saved by proxy of the the husband/father. They all had to make an individual decision to follow Christ.

#### RECONCILIATION LEADS TO MORE RECONCILIATION

The jailer was first reconciled to God, which led him to be reconciled to his former enemies. This should be our path as well!

### PHILIPPIANS (ACTS 16:35-40)

#### "RELEASE THOSE MEN"

The magistrates only intended to keep Paul and Silas in jail overnight. They thought a beating and time in prison would keep them from being disruptive again.

- Paul plays a bit of a wild card though and lets the jailer know that Paul and Silas were both Roman citizens that had been denied their rights.

#### PAUL GETS A LITTLE SASSY

Paul refuses to leave the prison until the magistrates themselves escorted them out. Paul had the control now because as a Roman citizen he could have written directly to Caesar the laws that had been violated.

- The magistrates recognized their mistake and escorted them out, but they also begged them to leave because of fear.

#### SASSINESS THAT PROTECTED THE FAITH

So, why did Paul act in a way that seems a little defiant? It wasn't rebellion, but it was him trying to protect the reputation of the Christians in Philippi. Paul wanted everyone to know that they were not breaking laws or acting inappropriately.

- **As Christians we need to protect the reputation of Christ's Bride!**

#### THEY WOULD LEAVE, BUT NOT QUITE YET

The missionary team made a stop back at the newly formed church in Philippi that met at Lydia's house. Many believe Luke stayed and helped lead this church.

- We can also assume the jailer and his family and possibly the formerly possessed slave girl also worshiped in this house church.

#### FROM NOTHING TO SOMETHING

Assuming these newly delivered people worshiped at the same church, we have a healthy, vibrant group with no apostles present, no ordained ministers, and no "professionals" to lead them.

- **Despite their backgrounds and pasts, they became responsible for their walk with Christ, their city, and each other.**

#### THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- We war against "darkness, evil, and spiritual powers." There are demonic forces that tempt, oppress, and sometimes possess people.
- **We are not to be afraid of the demonic, but we're to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be confident of our God-given authority.**

#### CONTENTMENT VS. HAPPINESS

- While in prison at the darkest hour, Paul and Silas worshiped and prayed.
- We see that **happiness as the world teaches it is vastly different than the contentment God gives.** Happiness is contingent on circumstance. Contentment is present regardless of circumstance.

#### PHILIPPIANS: THE EPISTLE OF JOY

- The church in Philippi was comprised of diverse people with no Christian background in a city that was pagan.
- **The circumstances of the present and the mistakes and abuses of their pasts didn't stop them from taking responsibility for their faith, their city, and each other!**