

## Acts 16:16-40 The Results and Responsibility of Being a Witness

### I. Rejoice in Suffering For Christ's Name (16-25)

#### A. A Demonized Slave is Freed by Christ's Power (16-18)

##### 1. A Demonized Slave Antagonizes the Missionaries (16-18a)

###### a. They Encounter a Slave Girl With a Divination Spirit (16a)

- i. The missionaries were headed back to the place of prayer (NIV says "synagogue" but the word is not in the text)
- ii. The Slave girl has a πνεῦμα πύθωνα (pneuma puthona) – a "python spirit" or "pythoness spirit"
  - According to Greek mythology, Apollo killed "python" – a female dragon god near the oracle at Delphi
  - It was believed that Apollo spoke through the oracle at Delphi, so the term "python" became a standard term for consulting spirits, fortune-telling, or hearing oracles.

###### b. The Slave Girl Earned Money For Her Owners (18b)

- i. The girl was enslaved in two ways
  - She was inhabited by this spirit of divination
  - She was enslaved to her owners who used her for profit
- ii. The girl's owners made money from her predictions
  - Evidently people came to have their future told from the girl
  - The owners probably advertised her as being in contact with the spirits, or the gods

###### c. The Slave Girl Follows Them Announcing Their Intentions (17-18a)

- i. She followed them "many days" as if she was their announcer
  - She cried that they were servants of the most high God
  - She cried that they showed a way of salvation
- ii. What she said was technically true
  - From the Christian perspective, she was announcing truth
  - Yet, those who heard her in Philippi might have imported their own meanings into

her words – they may have thought Zeus was the most high god

- Satan uses “technically true” statements to lull people into believing a lie

## 2. Paul Exorcizes the Slave Girl’s “Spirit” (18b)

### a. Paul Rebukes and Exorcizes the spirit in Christ’s name

- i. Why did Paul wait so long to remove the spirit?
- ii. Paul became greatly annoyed and irritated at the woman’s constant yelling

- The word means grieved, troubled, disturbed, or irritated
- Yes, Paul felt like that too sometimes

- iii. Paul turns and commands the spirit to leave

### b. The Spirit immediately obeys and leaves

- i. Notice that there isn’t any fanfare or spectacle like in some performances we see today
- ii. At the name of Jesus, the spirit simply departs

## B. Paul and Silas Rejoice in Suffering For Christ (19-25)

### 1. Paul and Silas Suffer For Christ (19-24)

#### a. Paul and Silas Are Arrested (19)

- i. The Owners are upset that their investment is now gone – they can no longer profit from her prophecies
- ii. They Seize Paul and Silas and bring them before the authorities
  - Why just Paul and Silas? Luke and Timothy are also there.
  - Possibly because Paul and Silas looked Jewish. Luke was a Gentile and Timothy, who was half, could pass for a Gentile
  - Remember there were not many Jews in Philippi
  - They are charged as “Jews” in v.20

#### b. Paul and Silas Are Charged Falsely (20-21)

- i. Notice that nothing in the charges is said about them losing money from the girl
- ii. They are charged with disturbing the city
- iii. They are charged with advocating unlawful customs

- Neither of these things was true
- The disturbance only came because the owners were more concerned about profit than the slave girl
- The owners didn’t seem to mind the girl following the Missionaries around yelling

#### c. Paul and Silas Are Publically Beaten (22)

- i. The crowd joins in attacking Paul and Silas
    - ii. Paul and Silas are stripped and beaten with rods
  - d. Paul and Silas Are Wrongfully Imprisoned (23-24)
    - i. They are given no opportunity for defense
    - ii. They are sent to the jailer's custody
      - The jailer puts them in the inner part of the prison
      - The jailer fastens their feet in stocks
    - iii. They were no doubt cramped, hurting from the severe beating, and uncomfortable in the stocks
- 2. Paul and Silas Rejoice In Their Suffering (25)
  - a. At midnight they sang praises (or hymns) to God in their cell and praying
  - b. The other prisoners listened to what they were singing and praying
    - i. At any time Paul and Silas could have asserted their Roman citizenship and been free
    - ii. They rejoiced in being counted worthy to suffer for Christ
    - iii. They rejoiced in being a witness, even in the depths of the prison

## II. Represent Christ in Every Situation (26-34)

### A. The Jailer's Life is Delivered By Paul's Faith (26-28)

- 1. An Earthquake Shakes the prison, opening all the doors (26)
- 2. The Jailer Attempts to take his own life (27)
  - a. Assuming the prisoners have all fled when he woke up, the jailer realizes he is in trouble
  - b. Roman law stated that if a prisoner escapes custody, his guard would be given the prisoner's sentence
    - i. Rather than take blame for all the prisoners, the jailer decides to kill himself
    - ii. He would rather commit suicide (which was seen as honorable in Rome) than face punishment
- 3. Paul Stops the Jailer's Suicide (28)
  - a. Paul calls out saying that all the prisoners were still in their cells
  - b. Paul and Silas' faith was such that they did not try to escape, even when it was available
    - i. It even seemed like God opened the door for them
    - ii. Paul's witness for Christ was at stake – if he and Silas ran, they would impugn the church in Philippi – Christians would be seen as criminals
    - iii. Paul's own witness would be hindered if he ran from the authorities
    - iv. But why did the other prisoners stay?

B. The Jailer's Soul is Delivered By Paul's Preaching (29-32)

1. The Jailer's Heart is Convicted (29-30)

- a. He realizes that he almost killed himself and perhaps caught a glimpse of entering eternity unprepared
- b. He falls down before the men trembling (29)
  - i. The jailer falls down before the prisoners?
  - ii. The jailer trembled because of the fear of conviction
- c. He asks what he must do to be saved (30)
  - i. The jailer brought them out of the inner cell
  - ii. The jailer calls them "sirs" (kurioi) which is also translated "lords" – the Roman Jailer calling the prisoners sirs?
  - iii. The Jailer asks what he must do to be saved
    - He is ready to be truly delivered
    - Not just delivered from punishment by his overseers
    - He wants what these men have

2. The Jailer's is Given the Gospel (31-32)

- a. Paul instructs the Jailer that Salvation is by faith (31)
  - i. Different answers are given in Acts to this question
  - ii. Sometimes, believe (as here), sometimes repent and be baptized (as in Acts 2)
  - iii. There is no true faith without repentance and no true repentance without faith
  - iv. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"
- b. Paul preaches God's Word to the Jailer and his house (32)
  - i. Paul and Silas spoke many other things to them that is not recorded here
  - ii. Paul and Silas spoke the word to the jailer and his whole household

C. The Jailer's Life is Changed By Christ (33-34)

1. The Jailer cares for the missionaries (33a)

- a. The Jailer took them out and washed their wounds
- b. The Jailer has had a true change of heart
- c. This wasn't necessary, but it was kind and the right thing to do

2. The Jailer submits to baptism (33b)

- a. The Roman gives himself to follow Christ's command
- b. This would be hard to explain to the magistrates

3. The Jailer Serves them in his own house (34)

- a. The jailer takes them out of the prison and into his own home

- b. I wonder how many prisoners he has ever brought home
- c. He feeds the prisoners from his own table
- d. His whole house rejoices with them because they have trusted in Christ
- e. They evidently go back and spend the rest of the night at the Jail

### III. Prepare the Way For Other Witnesses (35-40)

#### A. Paul Asserts His Right As A Roman Citizen (35-37)

1. The Magistrates order Paul and Silas released (35-36)
  - a. The authorities send word that they should be let go (35)
    - i. Evidently they feel like their point was made
    - ii. They didn't want to detain them for trial, they just wanted to teach Paul and Silas a lesson
  - b. The Jailer reports the decision to Paul and Silas
    - i. He was probably happy they were being released
    - ii. He was probably rejoicing as he told them to go in peace
2. Paul Refuses to Leave the Prison (37)
  - a. Paul Claims They were Beaten without cause
    - i. Roman citizens were not allowed to suffer certain humiliating punishments
    - ii. Paul and Silas, both Romans, had been publically beaten and humiliated
  - b. Paul Claims They were imprisoned unjustly
  - c. Paul refuses to leave until the magistrates themselves escort them out of the prison
    - i. Paul doesn't do this out of spite or for revenge
    - ii. Paul knows that as the first missionaries in Philippi, he is setting a precedent for the church in that city
    - iii. Paul will not leave with the city viewing Christians as criminals or derelicts

#### B. The Church is Vindicated in Philippi (38-40)

1. The Magistrates feared because Paul and Silas were Romans (38)
2. The Magistrates publically apologize and ask them to leave the city (39)
3. Paul and Silas visit the Church and Depart Philippi (40)