

This morning we are continuing our journey through the book of Acts. Acts was written by Luke, and in fact in ch. 16 Luke actually joins Paul on his journey, as the narrative goes from 3<sup>rd</sup> person to 1<sup>st</sup> person. We are following Paul in his missionary journeys as he brings the good news of Jesus to cities around Europe and Asia. We are in chapter 16 this morning, and we'll be focusing on three interactions that Paul has during his time in Philippi, three very different people who are added to the church, to the family of God. This chapter has a lot to tell us a lot about salvation and about the church.

**Acts 16:6-40** - *Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. <sup>7</sup> When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. <sup>8</sup> So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. <sup>9</sup> During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." <sup>10</sup> After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. <sup>11</sup> From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. <sup>12</sup> From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. <sup>13</sup> On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. <sup>14</sup> One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. <sup>15</sup> When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us. <sup>16</sup> Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup> This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." <sup>18</sup> She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her. <sup>19</sup> When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. <sup>20</sup> They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar <sup>21</sup> by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice." <sup>22</sup> The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. <sup>23</sup> After they had been*

severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. <sup>24</sup> Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. <sup>25</sup> About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup> Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. <sup>27</sup> The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup> But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" <sup>29</sup> The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>31</sup> They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved-- you and your household." <sup>32</sup> Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. <sup>33</sup> At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. <sup>34</sup> The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God-- he and his whole family. <sup>35</sup> When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." <sup>36</sup> The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace." <sup>37</sup> But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out." <sup>38</sup> The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. <sup>39</sup> They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup> After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left.

Paul has significant interactions with three very different people in this chapter. The first person we read about is a woman named Lydia, who according to v. 14 was a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira and a worshiper of God. What does this tell us about her? She is a businesswoman. She is from the city. And she deals in purple cloth, which was a very precious commodity, so she was likely well off. She is also a worshiper of God, which was a technical term also known as a God-fearer, someone who worshiped the God of the Jews but had not yet converted to Judaism.

In this section, Paul and Luke and his companions find this group of women who have gathered for a worship service. Typically they would go to a synagogue, but there needed to be ten Jewish men in order to have a synagogue, and evidently

there were not enough in Philippi. So he joins them, and the group is small enough that they can sit down and have a Bible study. Through this conversation, it says that the Lord opened Lydia's heart and she responded in faith to Paul's message. She is baptized along with members of her household, and she convinces Paul and his companions to stay at her house during their time in Philippi.

Some come to faith through studying the Word, or through hearing the Word preached. One example would be John Wesley, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Englishman known for beginning the Methodist Church:

*On this day, May 24th, 1738 he opened his [Bible](#) at about five in the morning and came across these words, "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should partakers of the divine nature." He read similar words in other places.*

*That evening he reluctantly attended a meeting in Aldersgate. Someone read from Luther's Preface to the Epistle to Romans. About 8:45 p.m. "while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."*

So to sum up: Lydia is a woman, cosmopolitan, upper class, Asian, God-fearing, and is converted through studying the Word.

**On to the second person.** In v. 16, they run into a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She was used by her owners to predict the future and earn money for her owners. She is shouting out "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." Finally Paul is irritated and casts out the demon.

This woman is very different than Lydia. Although she is also a woman, she is a slave, lower class, Greek, demon-possessed, and she is converted through an experience of the power of God, as Paul's words free her from demonic oppression.

Some are converted through experiences of the power of God, setting them free from oppression or addiction. Think of Bill Wilson, founder of AA, and all who have been set free by the power of God from addiction through the years.

As a result of their ministry to this girl, her owners are upset, and seize Paul and Silas, who are stripped and beaten and thrown into prison. In prison, they meet the third individual – **the Roman jailer**. He puts their feet in the stocks and guards them carefully. He would have been a retired soldier, a Roman man. But as Paul and Silas are in the stocks, they are praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners are amazed. Suddenly an earthquake shakes the foundations and the doors fly open and the chains came loose. The jailer wakes up and realizes that he is going to be killed for failing his job, so he is going to kill himself. Remember that it is a shame and honor culture. But Paul shouts out “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” And the jailer falls trembling before Paul and Silas and asks, “Sirs, what must I do to be save?” Paul replies, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.” And he and his family are baptized. He invites them into his house and washes their wounds.

Paul and Silas are given the opportunity to pay the jailer back for his cruelty to them. But they show him kindness and mercy.

Summary: man, retired military, working class, Roman, oppressing the believers, and converted through the witness of believers who display peace and joy in the face of suffering and forgiveness and mercy in the face of oppression.

Some are converted mainly through the witness of believers. Think of Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, who was a tenured English professor at Syracuse, in a committed lesbian relationship, with a specialty in queer theory. Through the love and care of a local pastor and his wife, she eventually turned to Christ. Her story is recounted in her book, *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*.

The chapter ends with Paul and Silas meeting with the church that is now meeting at Lydia’s house before they leave.

All three are added to the church. What does this mean for us today?

### 1) What must I do to be saved? Just believe

Nothing you can do but receive His mercy. This could be done by a child or an adult. Jesus died forgiving his enemies. It’s about laying down your rights, not asserting your rights.

This brings to mind Charles Spurgeon’s conversion (Spurgeon is generally considered one of the greatest preachers of all time):

*On January 6, 1850, 15-year-old Charles Spurgeon was trudging up Hythe Hill in Colchester, on his way to church. When the blizzard prevented him from going further, he turned the corner and made his way into a small Primitive Methodist Church on Artillery Street.*

*He wrote:*

*I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair now, had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning, when I was going to a place of worship. When I could go no further, I turned down a court and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there might be a dozen or fifteen people. The minister did not come that morning: snowed up, I suppose. A poor man, a shoemaker, a tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had nothing else to say. The text was, 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth' [Isa 45:22].*

*He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in the text. He began thus:*

*'My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, "Look." Now that does not take a deal of effort. It ain't lifting your foot or your finger; it is just "look." Well, a man need not go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man need not be worth a thousand a year to look. Anyone can look; a child can look. But this is what the text says. Then it says, "Look unto Me."*

*'Ay,' said he, in broad Essex, 'many of ye are looking to yourselves. No use looking there. You'll never find comfort in yourselves.'*

*Then the good man followed up his text in this way:*

*'Look unto Me: I am sweating great drops of blood.*

*Look unto Me; I am hanging on the Cross.*

*Look: I am dead and buried.*

*Look unto Me; I rise again.*

*Look unto Me; I ascend; I am sitting at the Father's right hand.*

*O, look to Me! Look to Me!'*

*When he had got about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes, he was at the length of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with*

*so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. He then said, ‘Young man, you look very miserable.’*

*Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit before. However, it was a good blow struck. He continued: ‘And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you do not obey my text. But if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.’*

*Then he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist can, ‘Young man, look to Jesus Christ.’*

*There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that moment and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the Precious Blood of Christ.”*

What must you do to be saved? Believe in Jesus!

***Romans 4:3-5*** - *What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." <sup>4</sup> Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. <sup>5</sup> However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*

***Ephesians 2:8-9*** - *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.*

## 2) God saves all kinds of people in all kinds of ways

Teaching & preaching, apologetics & reason. Prayer and experience of God. The witness of other believers. And he brings all kinds of people into His church.

In the days of Jesus, this was a traditional prayer that Jewish men prayed:

**“Blessed are thou King of the Universe who hast not made me a slave, a Gentile, or a woman”.**

In light of that, look at who was added to the church in this chapter: none other than a slave, a Gentile, and a woman. As Paul said:

*Galatians 3:28-29 - There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

### 3) Your salvation brings you into the church community, the family of God

The chapter ends with them meeting together at Lydia's home. They are all now brought together, adopted into the family of God, brothers and sisters, using their gifts to love and serve each other.

God saves all kinds of people in all kinds of ways, bringing them into a family where they can care for each other and be cared, and bring His good news to the world.