

Acts 16:16-40

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- Introduction: read Acts 16:25-31- announce,ents-lunch, Easter egg hunt, Michael's concert, Ken ham in Quincy- talk to Don

- This morning, as we look at this story of physical pain and trial that leads to greater glory for God, I couldn't help but think about William Tyndale.

 - o Really, in many ways, the fact that we have an English Bible today can be traced to William Tyndale.

 - o William Tyndale was born around 1494. He developed a passion at an early age for the Lord and soon after his education at Cambridge found himself pastoring a small church

§ At this time, the only people that owned Bibles were priests and the churches. Families didn't have bibles and bibles were never in English. On Sunday morning, everything was in Latin, but most people couldn't SPEAK LATIN! In fact, in 1408, it became illegal to read the bible in English in England!

- This bothered Tyndale and he later said, "It was impossible to establish the people in any truth unless scripture was laid before their eyes in their own language."

- Unfortunately, Tyndale's conviction was not shared by the Roman Catholic Church which was the only church in England.

o By 1524 there was a warrant for his arrest. He left London and spent the next 12 years on the run throughout Europe, publishing 3 translations of the New testament and writing multiple other works. He also began to study Hebrew and translated Genesis-2 Chronicles.

o Throughout his time on the run he had many trials; with many assassination attempts before he was finally betrayed.

§ Upon his betrayal, he was arrested, thrown in a prison for a year, where he'd talk about how cold he was and how challenging it was, while also asking for his Hebrew Bible so he could continue translating!

§ Alas, it was not granted to him. Finally, his trial came. It was not a fair trial; everyone knew he'd be sentenced to death and he was.

· Soon, he found himself tied to a cross with a metal chain around his neck being hung before being burned at the stake.

· Tyndale suffered and just before he died he yelled out, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes!"

o Tyndale died. But, his passion did not. Tyndale was killed in 1536, at age 42. By 1539, the King of England, King Henry VIII would endorse an English bible, one that pulled heavily from Tyndale's work.

o Clearly, Tyndale's translation did not end how he expected. Yet, what we can take-away from the life of William Tyndale is very similar to what we can take-away from our passage today. ***GOD'S PLAN IS BIGGER THAN WE COULD EVER IMAGINE!***

§ I know we've talked about this before, but it's so clear as we go through the book of Acts that this matters! It's repeated OVER AND OVER AND therefore, we need to pay attention to it!

- **BODY:** Paul's second missions trip is full of examples of God's plan and God's sovereignty.

- o If you recall, two weeks ago, we saw Barnabas and Paul split from one another. When this happened, we discussed how God used it to *double* the number of missionary pairings sent out from Antioch!

- o Although it seemed like an utter defeat as these two former friends left *bitter and devastated* we saw how God worked it out for good!

§ We then saw how Paul and Silas met Timothy and Timothy agreed to travel with them!

- o Then last week, we saw how the traveling group gained another member, Luke. Before that though, we saw how Paul, Silas and Timothy were stopped by God from entering Asia and were instead sent to Philippi.

§ Philippi if you recall was a major city and Roman Colony. It was established as a place for Praetorian Guards to retire to! In the Roman military, if you successfully completed your service in good standing, you were given land, so all around the empire, these "colonies" were established on the backs of former soldiers.

- Philippi was one of the nicest. It was full of wealthy retired soldiers, who became wealthier through the mines of Philippi. They also were deeply and proudly Roman.

o The city of Philippi was modeled after Rome and was even considered a “mini-Rome.”

o It was in the middle of this heavily Romanized culture that Paul, Silas, and Timothy entered; along with Luke.

§ When they arrived, they could not go to the Synagogue as they often did because there was no synagogue.

§ Instead, they went to the river outside of the gate and there they shared the gospel with some women who prayed.

§ One in particular; Lydia, a seller of purple clothes stood out in Luke’s account.

· Luke said that the Lord moved in her heart and she came to faith!

o We saw how God clearly worked in her and in her family as they were all saved and baptized.

o Lydia then insisted that the missionaries stay with her and as Luke says, “she prevailed.”

o So, they stay with Lydia and her family!

o As we start looking at our passage in verse 16 we read, *“As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came*

out that very hour.”- Acts 16:16-18

§ Paul, Silas and the other missionaries are going to the place of prayer again.

§ Remember, they stayed in each city for a length of time. These weren't 3 day trips where half of it was spent traveling!

- They built relationships and the goal was to fulfill the great commission; going into ALL THE WORLD preaching, teaching, baptizing and discipling as they traveled!

- o Those things took time! As they travel around Philippi, something begins to happen; something that ANNOYS Paul.

§ A slave who is able to fortune tell; likely through demon possession, begins to follow them around YELLING!

§ What does she yell, “THESE MEN ARE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD, WHO PROCLAIM TO YOU THE WAY OF SALVATION!”

- She's not wrong, but it IS ANNOYING!

- And it had to be hard to hear over and over. This girl NEEDS JESUS HERSELF!

§ Finally, Paul is *greatly annoyed* and commands the spirit to leave her!

- The spirit obeys and leaves. Truly there is power in the name of Jesus!

- God's power is once again at work! DO NOT MISS THAT! This isn't about what Paul can do; this is all about what GOD DOES!

- Although this woman's freedom from possession is

something to celebrate, not everyone sees it that way! Instead, in verse 19 we read, *“But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, “These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.” The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods.” - Acts 16:19-22*

- o The owners are absolutely livid at Paul and Silas and they arrest them! They take them into the marketplace; which would have been busy and begin to whip the crowd into a frenzy!

- § They would have been yelling, and complaining, while dragging Paul and Silas around and finally bringing them before the magistrates; who ruled on the day-to-day matters of Philippi!

- o Specifically in the charges, we see that the Philippians are upset about the Jewish origin of Paul and Silas. They reduce this down to a *racial issue*.

- § They are angry because Paul and Silas aren't “Roman enough.” Instead, they are these “outsiders.”

- Herein lies one of the challenges of cross cultural ministry right? We don't control what preconceived notions someone may have about us.

- o And let's be clear, this goes both ways. We have preconceived notions, and so do others! This doesn't have to be overseas, this can be where someone is from

in America, what someone does in work; there are a lot of preconceived notions we bring with us in life and in evangelism.

§ Here though, Paul and Silas are being stereotyped as Jewish and the complaint is about this!

§ Remember, Philippi is this *Ultimate Roman city*. Therefore, these two Jewish men aren't "good enough" or "smart enough."

o The magistrates make a sentence in the midst of this bad situation! The sentence is given through their actions. The magistrates tear Paul and Silas's clothes and give orders to beat them with rods.

§ Beating with rods was a Roman Military punishment; something that seems fitting in Philippi. Basically, one soldier would beat the one being punished with a stiff, thick wooden rod; beating them with NO MERCY!

· This was renowned for cutting people, for leaving splinters, and for significant PAIN, bruising and BLEEDING!

o It's like being flogged!

o You do NOT WANT TO BE BEATEN WITH RODS!

o Once again, Paul finds himself in the midst of a riot. This same thing has happened in Iconium and Lystra amongst other places!

§ Why does this happen? I truly believe it happens because the very message of the gospel is offensive!

· I'm very serious on that! The message of the gospel; that we are saved through FAITH IN JESUS ALONE, NOT BY OUR OWN WORKS, as Paul writes in Ephesians 2, is offensive

- It says that WE ARE NOT ENOUGH and that's the opposite of what people want to hear!
- o Think about it! Our society, much like the Roman society, spends a lot of time talking about our self-esteem and how good we are. But the basic reality of the gospel is the opposite!
- o And when people found themselves convicted of this, they continued in rebellion against God, physically!
- In verse 23 and 24, we see more of the account of this assault reading, *“And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.”- Acts 16:23-24*
- o They are beaten with rods, suffering MANY BLOWS, and are thrown in prison.
- § They don't just find themselves in prison, they are in the INNERMOST PART OF THIS PRISON!
- There are no windows, no fans, it's hot, it smells bad, they are bleeding and bruised, they are in pain and they find themselves fastened in stocks!
- o This is an UGLY PICTURE!
- § Really, consider this with me! This is a total beating that they have suffered. They've been mugged to put it into modern terms and now they are thrown into a dark dungeon! There's no advil to be found, there's no bandages, there's the smell of human excrement and fear. This is not a place you want to be!
- This seems like a hopeless situation! Remember, they are never really sentenced, so they don't know how

long they'll be in prison! Disturbing the peace in Ancient Rome was one of the worst crimes to be charged with!

o This could land them in front of the Emperor.

§ Consider that. They could genuinely be facing execution for sharing the gospel!

§ Take a second. How would you react to that situation? That's a real question! How would you react?

· Look at how Paul and Silas react. *“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and 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 bonds were unfastened.”- Acts 16:25-26*

o Paul and Silas don't lost hope! They are confident in the Lord, praying and singing their praise to God.

Instead of reacting with panic, once again, we see early believers **RUNNING TO GOD IN DIFFICULTIES!**

§ This should be a roadmap for us!

o Not only do Paul and Silas find themselves praising God, they find others listening in! The other prisoners are **FASCINATED!**

§ To them, these two are inevitably going to be miserable. After all, they are beaten and thrown in jail; but instead, something else happens! These two **REJOICE!**

· They have hope that the other prisoners do not!

o God is opening yet another opportunity for faithful ministry!

o Likewise, when we face a trial, God may be opening a new door for ministry!

§ Keep that in mind!

· Famously in verse 26, there's a massive earthquake. Cells shake, chains fall off, doors come flying open! This is clearly God working!

o Naturally, we'd expect a massive prison break and that's exactly what the jailer expected in verse 27.

· *“When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.”- Acts 16:27-29*

o The jailer assumes that everyone will be gone and he plans to kill himself. The punishment he faced for a successful prison escape like this would have been death, so he decides to just handle it himself.

o All of a sudden though, he hears Paul call out telling him that everyone is still there!

§ That had to be a crazy moment! NO PRISONERS HAVE ESCAPED! THE DOORS ARE OPEN, THEIR CHAINS ARE OFF and they have STAYED PUT! THEY HAVE REMAINED IN PRISON!

o The jailer has lights brought in and he goes to the innermost chamber and falls at the feet of Paul and Silas!

§ These two men beaten and made fun of on account of God are now seen as a type of “savior” to this Roman

man.

§ The Roman jail and design in Philippi had NOTHING on God! Nothing in human history is greater or more powerful than God!

· Now this jailer is seeing these two men in a totally new way! He now is understanding that these men are more than just common prisoners!

· We see that in his response to them in verse 30. *“Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.”- Acts 16:30-34*

o The Philippian jailer is just struck with his need to be saved! He needs the salvation that Paul and Silas proclaimed!

§ LOOK AT WHAT GOD HAS DONE! GOD HAS TURNED EVIL INTO GOOD! WE SEE THIS ALL THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE!

· Think of Joseph, think of Daniel in the Lion’s Den! Think of Job as he’s lost everything and is surrounded by mockers!

o GOD IS BIG AND GOD TURNS EVIL INTO GOOD ALL THE TIME! For Joseph, he found himself freed in a dramatic way beyond what he ever would have

imagined!

o For Job, he recuperated what he lost and more! For Daniel and Paul and Silas, God used their suffering to open a door for God's name to be made great!

§ If you want a great parallel of this, go read the first few chapters of Daniel! We see over and over God providing for Daniel and his friends!

o The jailer asks to be saved and they respond with the truth! **"BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS AND YOU WILL BE SAVED!"**

§ His household believes also and they are saved!

· I know it may not seem clear, but in verse 31 and 32, salvation still comes through individual belief! Paul and Silas end up preaching to the jailers household. Servants, family members, etc.

o The jailer believes and he then acts out of his belief! Remember, love and good works comes from the **HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN US!**

o We see that clearly as the jailer takes Paul and Silas and cares for them, washing out all their wounds, caring for these prisoners! It's very humble and why would he do it? Because Jesus has worked in his heart!

§ Then, he is baptized with his family! He's excited by the fact that Jesus has saved him and **HE WANTS TO BE BAPTIZED!**

· Then, look at verse 34! The jailer brings these prisoners into his house and feeds them, rejoicing with his household that he has been saved!

o **OVER AND OVER WE SEE THAT THIS MAN IS OVERCOME BY THE AMAZING REALITY OF HIS**

SALVATION!

o He gets it! He understands that he was eternally separated from God by the sins in his life, but htat NOW HE IS SAVED AND HAS HOPE!

§ WHAT A THING TO REJOICE OVER!

· In verses 35-38, we see one of the more strange interactions involving Paul. We read, *“But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, ‘Let those men go.’ And the jailer reported these words to Paul, sayin, ‘The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace.’ But Paul said to them ,’They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.’ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens.”- Acts 16:35-38*

o The magistrates decide the next morning that being beaten and thrown in jail overnight is enough to scare Paul and Silas! There’s a lot of ego in the magistrates. They assume that Paul and Silas will be intimidated by the ROMAN RULE!

o The jailer then tells this to Paul, expecting no doubt that Paul will be rejoicing! After all, it’s been a wild night!

o Instead of rejoicing though, Paul is upset! Now, I have to confess, this puzzled me at first, much like it must have puzzled the jailer!

§ David Gooding in his commentary *True to the Faith*,

has some great insight on this though.

§ Gooding establishes that there are two parts to Paul's comments. First, "The magistrates had broken the law in having Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned before and without a trial. It was a serious offense to treat Roman citizens in that way; and if Paul and Silas had had the resources and the mind to prosecute them in higher courts, they would have been in trouble... Paul and Silas would not have done this. They did not seek revenge."

- So first, we see that Paul and Silas show mercy. They are honest about the way that their rights are broken, but then they **SHOW MERCY**, choosing **NOT TO CAUSE FURTHER FIGHTING!**

§ Secondly, Paul makes the magistrates come escort him out. Gooding argues that this was also deliberate because it, "impressed on their minds the illegality of their earlier behavior which would have restrained the magistrates from further harassment of the Christians, at least for the time being. Paul was prepared to suffer unjustly and without revenge for the sake of other people's salvation. But he would do all in his power to save his converts from needless persecution."

- Ok, let's summarize that. Basically, Paul and Silas take this opportunity to strategically protect this baby church! They leave Timothy and Luke stay also.

- We know from the letter to the Philippians that we have in scripture that the believers endure and persevere, but we also see that this tact seems to have worked!

o Paul and Silas are able to protect the new believers as much as possible by calling this injustice to attention.
o So let's be clear, Paul's anger and disagreement is not from a place of pride; rather, it is from a place of caring about the well-being of others!

§ Paul isn't really looking for an apology, as much as he is looking for two things. First, a chance to share the gospel and to forgive these men, and secondly, he's looking to ensure that the new believers are left alone!

§ Paul cared deeply about his friends and those he ministered to as we can read in 2 Corinthians. Here, we see Paul seeking to PROTECT, much like a father protects his family and how GOD protected Paul so often!

· We see the humility of Paul's motivations backed up in verses 39-40. *"So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed."* - Acts 16:39-40

o The magistrates apologize and ask them to leave. Paul and Silas go out of prison, go to Lydia's house, briefly encourage the believers and leave.

§ Hold on, yes, that's right; they ENCOURAGE THE BELIEVERS! THEY'VE JUST BEEN INCORRECTLY JUDGED AND THROWN INTO PRISON, yet they ENCOURAGE THE BROTHERS!

· They don't whine or complain, they ENCOURAGE THE BROTHERS!

· They find such joy and strength in the Lord that even

in the darkest and hardest of times they can ENCOURAGE OTHERS! I don't know about you, but I find that convicting! What faith they had that in the midst of a trial like this, they could encourage the brothers.

§ They also live up to what the magistrates ask and they leave. Their objection to the magistrates really is about others, not about them! They trust that God will work in the Philippian church and they move forward!

- One of the hardest things we can ever do in ministry is to let go and trust God, but it's also one of the most important things! After all, it isn't us doing the work; it's God working!

- That's exactly what we see Paul and Silas modeling here. They are letting go and they are moving on.

- **CONCLUSION:** Today we've seen a very famous passage and we've seen how God's plan is BIGGER than we could ever imagine.

- o As we begin to wrap up our time together, I just want to make a pair of applications.

- o First, if you are here and you know the Lord, I want to challenge you that God will open the door, it's our job to follow through.

- o Will you be faithful in it, even if the door is in the midst of a trial? I don't know about you, but it can be hard to see how God is working in a trial, but HE IS!

§ We saw that today and we also see that in places in scripture like esther!

- Esther is tasked with saving her people. God is with her and God guides her, but at the same time, Esther is

not in a great spot!

o She has to risk her own life to request the saving of her people!

o That's a trial! But, what do we see from people like Esther and Paul and Silas, and even William Tyndale?

§ We see examples of people who **FAITHFULLY SERVED THE LORD!**

§ **OVER AND OVER WE SEE EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE WHO FAITHFULLY SERVE THE LORD!**

§ Over and over, we also see how God opens doors for them to serve Him and **HOW GOD IS WITH THEM!**

· So for us, I want to challenge us, let's share the gospel and live it out with **NO FEAR!** There is no reason to be afraid!

§ Today, everything in our passage was really closely tied to a central event; the saving of the Philippian jailer and his family!

· Let's talk about this for a second. Whether you've heard this for 90 years or if you've never heard it before, let me encourage you to listen as we talk about the gospel that saves us!

· The gospel directly confronts our pride. We saw that as Paul and Silas preached it, angering the slave owners and we saw it just before the jailer was saved.

o The gospel calls out our pride! See, we want to be enough! The slave-owners thought they had it made, the jailer thought he was good enough. We think we are **ENOUGH**, or at least we want to be! We want to be a good enough husband, father, mother, employee, boss, etc. This is something we all battle!

o Our world, just like the Roman world, encourages that! We are encouraged to go be more, so that we can be the “best us’s” possible. But underneath that concept, is really a sad reality. We are trying to fill a void by being “enough” but that void can **ONLY BE FILLED BY JESUS!**

o So, that’s what culture says. What does scripture say? **SCRIPTURE SAYS TO GO FREE!** Scripture says that we can **HAVE HOPE!**

§ Leave those burdens behind! **RUN FREE!** Rejoice! You are saved not because of your own strength, but because of **GOD’S LOVE!** You are saved because Jesus came to earth, lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose from the dead!

· Because of that **YOU ARE SAVED!** We **AREN’T ENOUGH ON OUR OWN AND WE NEVER WILL BE!** That’s hard!

· But, Jesus has **REDEEMED YOU BY HIS BLOOD!** Jesus sets us free from every prison, whether it’s spiritual, or a physical one in Phillipi!

o Praise the Lord! As we pray, I want to read these words to a second verse of the doxology that was written by The Worship initiative. It goes, and this is the truth about God as we see in Acts 16 and in our lives:

“Praise God for all that he has done,
Praise Him for He has overcome
The grave is beaten, Love has won,
Praise God our savior, Christ the Son,”

If you’re here today and you haven’t accepted Christ as

your savior, repenting and believing, I want to challenge you to do that today. I know that may sound intimidating, but it isn't.

(prayer, you can pray this in your heart with me.)

PRAY- salvation and perseverance and csc