



Sermon Series: Acts

Sermon Title: The Final Word

Date: 8/23/2026

Acts 16:16-40

Big Idea: What feels permanent in life isn't permanent to Jesus.

Acts 16 shows three moments everyone assumed were permanent stop being permanent in one chapter - a demon controlling a girl, a prison built to hold men, and a man seconds from ending his life.

Paul Silenced A Voice That Made Someone Rich

A slave girl follows Paul through Philippi, controlled by a spirit that predicted the future and made her owners rich (**Acts 16:16-18**). Luke calls it a "python spirit," a term everyone in that culture recognized as pagan fortune-telling. What she shouts is technically true: "*These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.*" Paul's problem was not the words - it was the source; a demon can say something true and still do damage.

After days of this, Paul speaks to the spirit directly: "*In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her.*" It leaves immediately - no struggle, just authority. This lines up with the New Testament: God disarmed every power through the cross (**Colossians 2:15**), and at His name every knee will bow - in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (**Philippians 2:10**). Furious about their lost income, her owners drag Paul and Silas before the authorities, who have them stripped, beaten, and thrown into the innermost cell, feet in stocks (**Acts 16:19-24**).

Jesus Shook A Building Nobody Thought Would Move

At midnight, backs torn open and feet locked in stocks, Paul and Silas aren't groaning - they're praying and singing hymns loud enough for the other prisoners to hear (**Acts 16:25**). Then a violent earthquake hits, and every door flies open and every chain falls loose at once - not how earthquakes normally

behave (Acts 16:26), the same power that once told a storm to stop, and it did (Mark 4:41).

With every door open, nobody runs - the miracle isn't just the open door, it's what the prisoners do with it. The jailer wakes, assumes an escape, and draws his sword to end his own life rather than face the punishment Roman law required of him. Paul shouts, *"Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"* (Acts 16:27-28).

Jesus Gave New Life To A Man Who Thought His Was Over

Trembling, the jailer falls before Paul and Silas and asks the question that changes his life: *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:29-30). He's likely heard the slave girl shouting about "the way of salvation," heard two beaten men singing at midnight, and felt an earthquake end in every prisoner still in place, not escape. Paul's answer is the simplest sentence in the passage: *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved"* (Acts 16:31). No ritual, no requirements first - just belief - trust. What happens next shows the change already took place: he washes their wounds before he's baptized, caring for the men who could have gotten him killed (Acts 16:32-34). Paul tells the Ephesians we were dead in our sins, but because of His great love, God made us alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:1, 4-5). By morning, the magistrates try to quietly release Paul and Silas, but Paul refuses, making them walk the two out publicly to protect the church's reputation.

What feels permanent in life isn't permanent to Jesus. Somewhere in your life there's a wall you've quietly decided is permanent - a stagnant relationship, a habit you've made peace with, a person you've written off, a season so dark you've stopped asking God for anything but survival. This passage isn't telling you to figure out spiritual warfare or expect an earthquake on command - it's telling you who Jesus actually is against walls like that. He has authority over what you can't see, the physical world you can see, and a soul so far gone it's got a sword in its own hand. There isn't a wall His name doesn't tear down. If you already know Him, stop praying around your wall - start praying at it. If you don't know Jesus, you're like the jailer facing hopelessness: believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Paul didn't shut down the slave girl right away, even though what she shouted was technically true. Why does the source of a message matter as much as the words themselves? Where have you seen truth get twisted by where it comes from?**
- 2. Paul and Silas chose to pray and sing at midnight, beaten and chained, before anything about their situation changed. What would it look like for you to praise God in the middle of a hard circumstance instead of waiting for it to change first?**
- 3. When the prison doors flew open, no one ran. What do you think made the prisoners stay, and what does that tell us about how God's power sometimes shows up - not as an escape, but as a reason to remain?**
- 4. The jailer's question - "What must I do to be saved?" - came after watching Paul and Silas respond to suffering with faith. Who in your life might be watching how you handle hard seasons, and what are they learning about Jesus from you?**
- 5. What's a wall in your life you've quietly decided is permanent? What would it look like this week to stop praying around it and start praying directly at it?**