

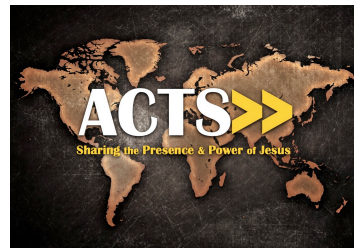
# SEQUOIA NOTES

## Today's Sequoia Message...

### God's Presence in Life's Darkest Moments

With Ryan Dawson - Lead Pastor

September 7, 2025



#### Does Jesus Christ really make a difference?

Acts 16:16-34 (NLT) One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future. She earned a lot of money for her masters by telling fortunes. <sup>17</sup> She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved." <sup>18</sup> This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And instantly it left her. <sup>19</sup> Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. <sup>20</sup> "The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!" they shouted to the city officials. <sup>21</sup> "They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice." <sup>22</sup> A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. <sup>23</sup> They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. <sup>24</sup> So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks. <sup>25</sup> Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. <sup>26</sup> Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! <sup>27</sup> The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. <sup>28</sup> But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!" <sup>29</sup> The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> Then he 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, along with everyone in your household." <sup>32</sup> And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. <sup>33</sup> Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. <sup>34</sup> He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

- **The power of Jesus breaks spiritual bondage.**

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- **The presence of Jesus sustains in suffering.**

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Philippians 1:28-30 (NLT) "Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. <sup>29</sup> For you have been given not only the privilege of **trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.** <sup>30</sup> We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past..."

Philippians 2:5-11 (NLT) "You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. <sup>6</sup> Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. <sup>7</sup> Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, <sup>8</sup> he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honour and gave him the name above all other names, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

- **So often our wounds become our witness & our trials become our testimony!**

- **The grace of Jesus brings salvation.**

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Acts 16:31 (AMP) "...Believe in the Lord Jesus *Christ* [give yourself up to Him, take yourself out of your own keeping and entrust yourself into His keeping] and you will be saved, [and this applies both to] you and your household as well [if they also believe]."

**Big Idea: Trust in Jesus—He breaks your chains, meets you in suffering, & saves you by His grace.**

#### Here's the challenge:

**Personally** – Will you trust Jesus enough to worship Him in life's darkest moments?

**Relationally** – Who around you needs to see the hope of Christ shining through your trials?

**Missionally** – Will you live with such grace & faith that others ask, "What must I do to be saved?"



Sequoia Impact Communities are where we  
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Family of Servants on Mission.

To get plugged in email:

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**God's Presence in Life's Darkest Moments**  
**#19 of 22 - September 7, 2025**

- 1) Read Acts 16:16-34. What is the **Context** for this passage?
- 2) What do we learn about the setting of this story—Philippi, the people involved, and the spiritual atmosphere? How does this background help us understand the conflict Paul and Silas faced?
- 3) How does this passage connect with the wider story of Acts (the spread of the gospel, opposition, God's power at work)?
- 4) **Observation:** What stands out to you about how Paul dealt with the slave girl's oppression and the reaction it stirred in her masters?
- 5) Notice Paul and Silas's response in prison (v.25). What do you observe about their faith and witness even in suffering?
- 6) **Meaning:** What does this passage teach us about the power of Jesus to break spiritual bondage, sustain us in suffering, and bring salvation?
- 7) Why do you think the jailer's first response after the earthquake was, "*What must I do to be saved?*" What does this reveal about the difference Jesus makes in people's lives?
- 8) **Application:** When have you experienced Jesus meeting you in hardship—turning wounds into a witness or trials into a testimony?
- 9) Who in your life may be looking for hope right now, like the jailer, and how might your trust in Jesus point them to salvation?



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