



**Demons and Trust
God's Schedule Not Mine But Prison?
Acts 16:25-40**

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Real spiritual warfare can show up many ways. One of them is what we will see in Act 16, a direct power struggle as Paul casts a demon out, and there is retaliation from the unseen realm. There is always retaliation, but the good news, Jesus has already won it all and we are aligned with the victorious side.



1 John 4:4

"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (NKJV)

Everything we see take place is because Paul, Silas and the team are being faithful to the Lord. Sometimes that is tough to digest because what we see take place is real ministry and real persecution.

Acts 16:16–18

"It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave woman who had a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing great profit to her masters by fortune-telling. **She followed Paul and us and cried out repeatedly, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you a way of salvation." Now she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and he turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.**" (NASB 2020)

How many want someone demon possessed as their marketing person? Not very many.

When we were last with Paul and the team, they were being followed and actively annoyed by a tool of the enemy, a demon possessed woman. No mystery to anyone, all the enemy has to do is have someone say or do something spiritually sketchy around Paul and he does indeed get annoyed eventually.

And yes, the enemy does indeed know that about him, so day after day this woman and her minders follow along.

After days of this, bingo, this woman, yelling false teaching about what the team is doing, is not only irritating, but distracting from the truth of the gospel. So, Paul turns to her and frees her by casting out the demon. Most likely not entirely expected by the enemy.

So, the enemy switches to a follow up plan, retaliation for kicking them out of this woman.

And that is not going to be the end of the story here in Philippi. This exorcism impacts a cash stream, and to the enemy, cash is king since that is one of the tools he uses to enslave the world.

Acts 16:19–21

"But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was suddenly gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men, Jews as they are, are causing our city trouble, and they are proclaiming customs that are not lawful for us to accept or to practice, since we are Romans." (NASB 2020)

The owners of this woman were only interested in the money she was worth to them and nothing else. That becomes very obvious with the massive redirect the enemy engages in here.

In a neat wordplay or pun Luke says in v. 18c that the spirit "left her" (ἐξηλθεν) that same hour, and at the same time her 'words' (or owners' hope of making money left them ἐξηλθεν, v. 19). (Witherington III 1998, 495)

And with the demon now out of the girl, it has no place to go except those who it had been working for. This is why the sudden change of heart and the almost immediate attack. This is spiritual warfare in the physical world, retaliation, now taking place via the same demon that Paul just exorcised. And the lie they pursue revenge with is a lie we see applied all of the time today as well.



When the gospel is preached and lives are changed, not everyone in the greater community is happy about that. When the impact also spills over into the marketplace, those who are offended all tend to raise the same call, what is happening is a threat to law and order. What began in Philippi continues today.

Under that cry thousands, possibly millions, have been arrested, thrown into prison and in some cases, executed. Here in this country, street preachers in Chicago have been and continue to be illegally arrested and threatened with prison by Chicago leaders using the same so-called allegations. Paul will turn to the law; we do too in this nation.

The ACLJ has just taken a major step in the fight for religious liberty by filing a lawsuit against the city of Chicago for the unconstitutional arrests of Christian street preachers. This lawsuit, filed today, seeks justice for... (those), who were all wrongfully arrested for nothing more than sharing the Gospel in public. This case is about more than just one incident. It reveals a troubling pattern of targeted enforcement against Christians – and preachers in particular – exercising their First Amendment rights. (Sekulow 2025)

This is only one of numerous examples now appearing in our nation. New York, Seattle, California, numerous locations now in Canada as well as in the UK. Yes, we do indeed live in the last days and Christianophobia is no longer in the shadows but has proponents globally.

In this nation, those who want to stop the move of Christ have recently turned to violence such as we witnessed with the recent martyrdom of Charlie Kirk. Even the President of the United States has stated that it appears Christians are now being targeted, but what we see here in Acts is that is really nothing new.

Even the former Secretary of State has used a variant of the same tired arguments used in Philippi. Satan has found a winning accusation to be used among those who are not interested in fact.

In an interview on September 24, 2025, just days after the martyrdom of Charlie Kirk, the former Secretary of State...warned that white men of a “certain religion” are responsible for “so much damage.” (Crane 2025)

Jesus related this type of activity would be one of the things taking place prior to His second coming at the end of the Tribulation. Only we are still rolling up the rapture. We are already seeing the shadows of this in what we now see in the news.

Matthew 24:9–12

“Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold.” (NLT)

Welcome to 2025. But as we see, this started back 2000 years ago, and it was also conflated with antisemitism in Philippi as well, and we have seen the same today.

This idea of Jesus followers being just another brand of Judaism would continue away from Jerusalem for awhile.

For the owners of the slave, this was an interference in their property rights, or so they would think. It does show you though which is more important to the unbeliever, money or people. As much as they would protest, money wins and it does so here.



The owners have Paul and Silas dragged into the marketplace in Philippi, where the civil authorities could very publicly judge them and punish them. Remember, this is a community that prides itself on being Roman, most likely to the point that one of the reasons there is a small Jewish population there is because they chased them away.

Acts 16:20–21

“and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, **“These men, Jews as they are, are causing our city trouble, and they are proclaiming customs that are not lawful for us to accept or to practice, since we are Romans.”**” (NASB 2020)

Several things to focus on, first the antisemitism, second the allegation of illegality where none exists, and then the assertion of the basis for this, we are Romans after all. Keep that thought in mind because Paul will indeed later use it as a major tool against them.

“Their accusations includes some of the anti-Semitism of the day: “These men are causing a lot of trouble in our city, since they are Jews.” Even these pagans recognize the Messianic Jewish emissaries as “Jews,” not teachers of some new religion. The businessmen also say the emissaries are “advocating customs that are against the law for us to accept or practice, since we are Romans,” implying this new expression might be an unsanctioned religion that was a concern of the civil government (Tacitus, Histories 5.5).

It is ironic that the messianic message often gets pushback from the Jewish community as somehow breaking Torah and from the larger world as too Jewish!” (Kasdan 2022, 124)

At this moment in history, Judaism had a specific legal status. In Rome. They were exempted from Caesar worship. Jews had not yet been kicked out of Rome but that would be coming. One thing that was thought to be illegal though in Rome was proselytizing by Jews, it wasn’t. Add to that the assertion will be a breach of the peace.

Roman authorities saw little to no distinction between Judaism and Christianity. At this point in church history, Christianity was seen as a subset of Judaism. Tying these two points together, we now see that the Christians were breaking the law by their evangelism. (Mohler Jr. 2019, 54)

They are doing a serious redirect and working the crowd to get into this as well. To do so, of course they say nothing about how they victimized this woman, nothing to see here, these religious people have done “bad” stuff in our town. This is exactly the same card being played in our nation today.

Go after the Christian who is not doing anything illegal at all. They have exercised their rights under the law and refused service to a group that if they were to provide the service, would mean they identify with and celebrate their sinful lifestyle. So they lawfully exercise their rights but that does not meet the culture’s goals. This card has been played in multiple states in our nation, and the goal has been to ruin those who follow Jesus. That starts here in Philippi with the inflammatory slander being bantered about by the owners of this woman who has been set free.

What they allege and say are all done intentionally to inflame the passions of the crowd. Just like we see done today.

Acts 16:22–24

“The crowd joined in an attack against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.” (NASB 2020)



This is now a mob, bordering on a riot and the magistrates, being good politicians, go with the crowd. There is no testimony from the accused at all. There is no investigation either. Let's teach them a lesson they will never forget.

So, the police attendants who were working for the magistrates, stripped Paul and Silas and then began to beat them with rods.

The beating shows that they experienced mob violence that was based upon nationalism. This included the magistrates, the city leaders themselves, who took the initiative. The Greek word for rent used here is a strong one, meaning "to strip off all around." The magistrates took the lead in stripping Paul and Silas of their outer garments. (Fruchtenbaum, The Messianic Bible Study Collection 1983, 16)

The mob was in control of what was taking place, no different than what we see in locations in our nation. Spiritual warfare was being played out in the physical world.

Once that was completed, and we have no idea of how many times they were struck since there was no legal restriction on this in Rome, Paul and Silas were then handed over to the prison.

All of this is in an enclosed area there in the agora of Philippi, so there is not a long distance to travel. But it also means this has all been incredibly public, something Paul will indeed take advantage of.

The magistrates further commanded the jailer to guard them securely, in other words, no escape possible and then they were placed in stocks. These were designed to increase the overall pain by forcing them to spread their legs uncomfortably wide. And this is in the inner portion of the jail where there is no light, and the air is only changed when the door opens.

The intent was to teach a lesson.

So, looking in on Paul and Silas, how would they be doing?

Miserable would indeed be the word. Here is Paul and Silas, in serious pain, bleeding, bruised, their legs chained in stocks, and what do they do? They pray, out loud, and then sing worship music. And all the prisoners there listen to this.

Acts 16:25

"Now about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;" (NASB 2020)

I wonder how many of those in prison, hearing this, became believers? In the middle of all of this, just when the prison ministry is getting good, God steps in.

Acts 16:26

"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 chains were unfastened." (NASB 2020)

And we would expect to then read, and Paul and Silas walked out followed by all the other prisoners. Nope.

First of all, the room is incredibly dark, and now there is dust everywhere from the earthquake. The door is open, and everyone in the prison knows it from the fresh air coming in. Amazingly, the chains and locks have failed on every prisoner. Now remember, Paul and Silas are in stocks, the others may be as well.



To free themselves would take awhile. Add to that the stiffness and pain from the beating and it would not be something anyone would do quickly.

In Roman prisons, the prison guard was personally responsible for the prisoners and if one was missing, they would most likely wind up serving the sentence, but if they all are missing, death is most likely the upcoming judgment. And there is this as well, the jailer has also been listened to the two insane men praying out loud and singing praises to the Lord.

Look at this from the perspective of Paul and Silas. They have done nothing wrong. They set a woman free from demons. They have been falsely accused, humiliated in public, beaten in public then locked up in the prison and all without the presentation of any formal charges or testimony. They never were able to even bring up what they will soon, that they are both Romans with legal rights that were ignored.

Why would God do this to us? Because there is a family that needs Jesus, the family of the jailer, and most likely more than one prisoner there in the prison as well. Everything the enemy wanted to have happen is beginning to backfire. Paul would later write this.

Romans 8:28

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (NKJV)

Test, trials, persecution, none of it is fun. However, if we are looking at the eternal aspects of what it is the Lord is doing rather than the temporal, we begin to find out why Paul is able to say this.

All things really do work together for good. Yes, it is hard to see in our current situation. But look at what God is now doing nationally in the wake of Charlie Kirk's martyrdom. Pray for all of those who are now discovering Christ.

Acts 16:27–30

"When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul called out with a loud voice, saying, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!' And the jailer asked for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas; and after he brought them out, he said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'" (NASB 2020)

The jailer knew the penalty, and he was ready to kill himself, even though there had been an earthquake, he still would be held accountable, and he was convinced that while he had slept, they had all escaped.

It sounds like the earthquake may not have been enough to wake him. But hearing rocks fall and the change in smells because of the dust in the air, he wakes up and the first thing he sees is the doors of the prison all wide open. Why didn't everyone run? I doubt it was because Paul and Silas were such good singers that they were waiting for an encore. But what they heard from them had been enough to be influenced by them. So, no one left.

Paul, hearing the jailer moving around and assuming the worst, yells at the jailer not to harm himself, no one has left. This saved the jailers life.

The jailer is now whip sawing between various emotional states. Shock, then abject horror, then a quiet resolve as he decided to kill himself followed with a last-minute reprieve. Now it all comes tumbling down and he begins to realize where he is and what has just taken place.



This is a man who has just looked death, as a sinner, right in the face and someone offered him a way out.

He has his staff bring a light and he goes in to see Paul and Silas and falls down in front of them not in worship, but in honor. He was tying pieces together, worship, praying, earthquake, theophany?

He was: trembling for fear and in terror, because he saw something divine in the events which had just occurred. Literally, Hell was scared out of him and he wanted to know what he had to do to be saved. (Fruchtenbaum, The Messianic Bible Study Collection 1983, 18)

Years ago, I learned that when the Holy Spirit brings a person to the full realization of their need to be saved, nothing will get in the way of that person until they find the answer.

I still remember the phone call I received one evening at the radio station, a man, in crisis was on the other end, and he told me he didn't want to hear anymore music, he just wanted to know what he needed to do to be saved. When we were done praying, he was indeed saved.

For the prison guard, he has reached the point where he wants to know only one thing, how do I have the kind of faith that sings songs in prison. What would make me want to love my jailer like you just did.

He brings them out of the inner prison and, reflecting respect, asks "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:31–34

"They said, **"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."** And they spoke the word of God to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and was overjoyed, since he had become a believer in God together with his whole household." (NASB 2020)

Paul and Silas knew at that moment why prison as they began to explain the basic of salvation to him and his family. The Jailer probably lived right there next to the prison, so he brought Paul and Silas to his home and by now the whole family is up and listening to what has happened while the jailer washes and tends to the wounds on their backs.

The well also became a baptismal as the jailer and his household were saved and then baptized together. And now, as new brothers and sisters in Christ, he offers hospitality to Paul and Silas feeding them.

This same man who, just a short while ago was ready to kill himself, is now rejoicing with his entire family as brand-new followers of Jesus Christ. And yes, he is still guarding them as he has not released them. No longer does the jailer view the wounded men as prisoners; he cares for them as brothers in Christ. In this wonderful picture of gospel hospitality, the jailer and his family rejoice in their new life. Perhaps they even sing a few songs from the Prison Hymns Collection Paul and Silas advertised. (Merida 2017, 229)

Acts 16:35–37

"Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their officers, saying, "Release those men." And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent word that you be released. So come out now and go in peace." But Paul said to them, "After beating us in public without due process—men who are Romans—they threw us into prison; and now they are releasing us secretly? No indeed! On the contrary, let them come in person and lead us out."" (NASB 2020)



The same men who had beaten Paul and Silas the previous day now show up with instructions to have them released early in the morning.

Call this phase one of the cover up. The magistrates have achieved their goals of humiliating yet another couple of traveling riff raff, Jews, and they seem to be taking great pleasure now in saying your free, now leave.

Contrary to the common misperception that being a follower of Jesus means you and I wear shirts that say Welcome on our backs, that is not entirely the case.

The laws of Rome were very clear about how to treat Roman citizens. This is no different that the laws of our nation and the guarantees embedded on the Constitution.

Believers in Yeshua are sometimes expected to be “meek and mild” and behave like “doormats.” While we are not to sue each other (1C 6:1–8), and we are to turn the other cheek and go the second mile (Mt 5:39–42), there is one situation where we are expected to stand adamantly, refusing to give ground; and that is where the Gospel itself is at stake. If the Gospel can be served better by fighting back, we should fight back—the fighting, of course, to be conducted ethically and by spiritual means (2C 10:3–5, Ep 6:10–18). We are to obey God rather than people (4:19&N, 5:29). (Stern 1996, Ac 16:35)

Are there situations where we, as Christians, should “fight the system.” Yes. The leadership there in Philippi was trying to stop the spread of the gospel and they cut a few corners in the process legally. We see the same thing happening throughout the west these days as followers of Jesus Christ are fined, arrested, persecuted for doing nothing more than following Jesus Christ.

For Paul and Silas, they clearly understood the intent was to block the gospel and they knew the fight is against the enemy, not the magistrates. So, Paul and Silas pull out the legal card. They are both Roman citizens and what has just happened to them is illegal.

In a proudly Roman community, it appears that those who are proudly Roman have stomped on the legal rights of other Romans. Oops. Paul goes further beyond the fact that he and Silas are Roman citizens, he tells the men who had beaten them the day before, everything they did was illegal.

Paul “points out the officials’ illegal behavior—public flogging and imprisonment without a trial or conviction of any crime—and he demands public redemption of public insults. He does all this to insure his proper treatment, but not because of personal pride. His concern is for the Gospel only: he wants to ensure that no one in Philippi will come away from the incident with the impression given by Sha’ul’s accusers (vv. 20–23), that the message of the Messiah is not for Romans.” (Stern 1996, Ac 16:35-17:1)

The context shows that this is not simply Paul and Silas demanding their rights because of their own personal offense, but there is a concern about this spreading to the now growing church there in Philippi.

Paul is communicating this all directly to the two who came to “officially” release them. “Paul replied that he would not accept a secret discharge because he and Silas were beaten, unconvicted, uncondemned Roman citizens. In fact he insisted that the authorities come and publicly escort them out of the jail. It was very serious matter when a local magistrate in a Roman colony took action against a Roman citizen, especially when he did so without proper cause or reason. The magistrates could lose their posts or be recalled and disgraced for such actions.” (Witherington III 1998, 499)

What had been done to two Roman citizens was illegal by Roman law. In fact, it violated two Roman laws. The first one was called lex valeria, which was passed in the year 509 B.C. The second law was lex



poscia, which was issued in 248 B.C. Both of those laws forbade Roman citizens to be beaten without a trial. (Fruchtenbaum, The Messianic Bible Study Collection 1983, 20)

Paul and Silas are now using civil law to protect them and the new church.

Acts 16:38–40

“The officers reported these words to the chief magistrates. And they became fearful when they heard that they were Romans, and they came and pleaded with them, and when they had led them out, they repeatedly asked them to leave the city. They left the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brothers and sisters, they encouraged them and departed.” (NASB 2020)

This was serious business. They became afraid, because now their own lives were at stake for what they had done to two Roman citizens. Apparently, Emperor Claudius once deprived the city of Rhodes of its freedom for having crucified a Roman citizen. So, the magistrates’ fear was indeed justified. (Fruchtenbaum, The Book of Acts, Ariel’s Bible Commentary 2020, 356)

Realizing the legal problem they have created for themselves, not only by having Romans publicly flogged without a trial, but encouraging mob violence as well, the magistrates have a problem. They show up at the prison and now they are the ones who are pleading with Paul and Silas.

First, they were fearful about this be reported to their superiors and what could potentially happen to them. Now that they know Paul and Silas are Romans, they are also now responsible for their safety and protection, and they do not have the resources to do so adequately because of the uproar they created.

In our culture today, that appears to only take place after the court makes the inevitable decision in favor of the Constitution. Then the battle turns to prevent there being any punishment on the ones who decided to play the role of magistrate. We see this from Harbingers Daily this past week.

In a victory for free speech on Tuesday, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Kentucky held Louisville accountable for violating the First Amendment rights of a wedding photographer and blogger and protected her freedom to speak messages that align with her religious beliefs.

Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys representing Chelsey Nelson and her photography studio filed the lawsuit Chelsey Nelson Photography v. Louisville-Jefferson County Metro Government in 2019 because Louisville’s law prohibited Nelson from expressing her views on marriage on her studio’s website and threatened to compel her to create photographs and blogs celebrating a message about marriage she does not believe. The district court kept a permanent bar in place that prevents Louisville from enforcing its law against Nelson in this way. The court also ordered Louisville to pay Nelson nominal damages for restricting her speech. Nominal damages are a type of compensation that remedy past harm, prevent future misconduct, and vindicate constitutional freedoms. (Alliance Defending Freedom 2025)

For Paul and Silas, after being repeatedly asked by the magistrates to leave, based on the Greek grammar used here, serious repeated over and over again. Paul and Silas apparently agreed but on their conditions. They would go see Lydia.

Acts 16:40

“They left the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brothers and sisters, they encouraged them and departed.” (NASB 2020)

This is an interesting church now. Lydia and her household and the prison guard and his family. But this forms the basis for the beginning of the church in Phillipi.



The church would become a source of joy for Paul as well as a source of support for the ongoing mission work.

Philippians 1:3–5 **“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.”** (ESV)

The ministry we see in Philippi shows us this, no one is beyond the reach of Jesus Christ. Lydia was an unlikely convert, but not as unlikely as the prison guard. What we see is Christ building His church.

He still is doing so today.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

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