



1. What had just happened in the city of Philippi (review verses 14-15)? In verse 16, how does Luke describe the slave girl Paul and his companions encountered on their way to the place of prayer? What was she doing to annoy Paul (17-18)? If she was telling the truth, why would this annoy Paul?
2. In response to the girl's cries, who did Paul talk to, and what command did Paul give? What was the immediate response?
3. According to verse 19, why did the masters of the slave-girl get angry with Paul and Silas; what was their motivation? What did they do to Paul and Silas? (19-21)
4. What difficult things were then done to Paul and Silas by the crowd, magistrates, and jailer (22-24)? Do you think they were surprised that they were persecuted? Should they have been surprised? (See John 15:18-20; Philippians 1:28-30.)
5. Verse 25 states Paul and Silas were praising God in prison after all these things had been done to them. How do you think Paul and Silas were able to praise God in these circumstances? Acts 5:40-42 tells of another occasion where believers were beaten for their belief in Christ, then praised God afterwards. What reason did they give there for praising God after their persecution?
6. How can a Christian choose joy in the midst of unpleasant circumstances? See Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4.
7. When the earthquake struck and the prisoners could have escaped, how did Paul and Silas respond? How did the jailer respond initially? How did his response change after he heard what Paul said to him? (26-30)
8. From verses 31-36, who or what changed the jailer's life? What did the jailer do after he believed in the Lord Jesus, to show evidence of his new faith?
9. Do you think Paul and Silas' suffering/persecution and subsequent praising of God led to the jailer's salvation in any way? If so, how?
10. Apply it: What was the last thing Paul and Silas did before they left the city (40)? Since the church today still needs that, who is someone in our church that you might be able to do that same kind of thing to this week?



Persecution, Praise, and the Power of God

Leader Notes for Acts 16:16-40

Last week we saw Paul and his companions (Silas, Timothy and Luke) arrive at Philippi, a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. It was here that the gospel first made its way into Europe.

On the Sabbath day the men made their way to the bank of the river where a group of women were gathered at a place of prayer. It was there that they met Lydia, a woman who was a worshipper of the God of Israel. When the men sat down and spoke to the women, the Lord opened Lydia's heart to Paul's message and she was saved. Not only was Lydia saved and baptized, but her whole household was as well. And just like that the first church was founded in Europe.

However, when the Holy Spirit begins to work, Satan often tries to thwart His efforts. We see this counterattack when Paul met a demon-possessed girl who followed them around, proclaiming they were telling the truth and were to be believed. Paul was fully aware that although the girl spoke the truth concerning him in verse 17, the source of the message was demonic. The spirit world sometimes witnesses to the truth, as told in the story of the demon possessed man in Mark 5:1-20.

Paul's reaction to the girl was one of deep distress (18). This was due to the fact that the girl was enslaved not only by her masters, but also by demonic forces. And Paul did not appreciate the source of the recommendation or demonic approval of his work. Therefore Paul responded by turning around and commanding that the evil spirit come out of her in the name of Jesus. The spirit came out that very moment.

This angered her owners because they lost their means of livelihood. Clearly they had no concern for the girl – a common flaw when someone enslaves others. They did not rejoice in her deliverance but were afraid that her deliverance would hurt them financially. The crowds seized Paul and Silas, not only because they were leaders of the religious group, but because they were obviously Jewish. Paul and Silas were dragged before the authorities and accused of unlawful practices and of stirring up trouble for Roman citizens. As a result, they were beaten and thrown in jail, where they had their feet put in stocks in order to cause pain and cramping in their legs.

However, imprisonment and persecution brought an unexpected result. In that dark inner prison, persecution led to praise as Paul and Silas, filled with joy, sang praises to God. Tertullian, an early Christian author, said, "The legs feel nothing in stocks when the heart is in heaven." This must have been a strange sound to the other prisoners.

Paul and Silas' singing was interrupted by the powerful intervention of God through an earthquake. This supernatural earthquake opened all the doors and freed all the prisoners of their chains. Prison could not hold these servants of God when He had other plans for them.

The reaction of the jailer, realizing his prisoners could escape, was one of panic. His first thoughts were of suicide. When Paul assured the jailer that no one had escaped, his focus changed from suicide to salvation. It was then that he asked the most important question anyone could ask – "What must I do to be saved?" God often uses panic and concern for our physical safety to confront us with our spiritual needs.

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Leader Notes for Acts 16:16-40, continued

Paul gave the only answer - "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Acts 4:12 says, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved."

Paul took this message to the house of the jailer. Afterwards the jailer demonstrated fruit of salvation by bringing Paul and Silas into his house, washing their wounds, feeding them, getting baptized immediately and rejoicing greatly in his new salvation along with his whole household.

The next morning the magistrates sent officers to release Paul and Silas from prison. Even though the jailer told them to go in peace, Paul refused to leave because of the way they had been treated as Roman citizens. The magistrates, who did not know they were Roman citizens before that, feared greatly because it was a serious offense to treat Roman citizens as Paul and Silas had been treated.

God's traveling workers eventually left, but not before they visited the house of Lydia and their new converts, whose lives had been touched by the Lord. The missionaries who had been beaten and imprisoned first encouraged these new believers in the Lord and then departed for their next ministry destination.