

Acts 16:11-3 – Philippians Chapter 1 (Introduction)

1. To be fully used by God, to His glory, we must be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit
2. To be fully used by God we must immediately be willing to completely surrender to the calling of the Holy Spirit
3. Today the Holy Spirit speaks to us mostly through God's Word and within our spirit – seldom as dramatically as in Acts

The Mishna, the collection of oral traditions, rules and regulations that the Jewish rabbis began compiling long before the birth of Christ, stipulated that in any city if there were at least 10 Jewish men living there, they were to establish a synagogue.

Vs. 14

Lydia owns her own supply chain along the primary interstate leading to Rome; she's dealing with the most expensive cloth of that day. We're told she owns homes in Thyatira and Philippi – both major crossroads.

Lydia has been attending a Jewish prayer meeting of women on the Sabbath day. And God opens her heart – verse 14b – “*to pay attention to what was said by Paul.*” That's another way of saying, God saved her . . . she believed the gospel delivered by Paul that day.

Vs. 15

Isn't it wonderful to find a business person who connects what they have with what God can do with it? Somebody who says, “My home, business, and my material goods actually belong to God – they're at His disposal.” I find it fascinating that the first church in Europe was strategically impacted by someone who understood the connection between what they had and what God could use for His glory.

Vs. 16

The word here translated “divination” comes from the Greek word “*python*” from which we get our word python. This was occultic, demonically empowered fortune telling. We know it is demonic because God's word expressly forbids divination, contacting the dead, and fortune telling. (*Deuteronomy 18:10-11*)

God forbids it, not because it's all harmless hocus pocus as some might claim, but because it can be legitimately connected to the demonic world that wants more than anything to provide information that can and will distract someone from the simplicity of the gospel, their walk of faith and trust in the living Lord for guidance and discernment. In *2 Corinthians. 11:3* we find “*But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*”

Occultists won't deny the Bible's wisdom when challenged correctly, they will attempt to open people's minds to the possibility they have something *better* than the Bible. We know from *Daniel 10:12-13* that demons are assigned stations all around the world. These conduits of communication are connected to the demonic world. Don't play with it.

Vs. 17

The occultic practices of Philippi begin to harass Paul and Silas. The demonic woman was telling the truth, but she was also the wrong person to do their advertising campaign. Her connection with Paul only discredited the gospel.

4. The non-believer and the religious lost can know the truths of the gospel and still be unsaved (e.g. demon faith *James 2:19*)

Vs. 18

Two women – totally different –rescued from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the marvelous kingdom of light:

- Lydia was Asian, this girl was Greek
- Lydia was in control of her business, this girl was a slave to an enterprise
- Lydia was cultured and refined; this young slave girl was uneducated and uncultured
- Lydia had been living the dream, this demonic possessed girl has been living a nightmare
- Lydia was known by name and had the right connections; this girl was an anonymous slave with no connections
- Lydia worshipped God but was lost; the girl was demon possessed and was also lost
- The liberating gospel rescued them both; they both needed saving

5. The church is to be a living demonstration of the unifying, forgiving, motivational power of the gospel of Jesus Christ

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Vs. 19

Twofold accusation:

- Number 1, “*These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city.*” This text reveals a deep seated anti-Semitism in the community.
- Number 2, “*They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.*” The real issue is Paul has damaged the commercial standing of a local business. He touched the almighty Roman dollar.

Later in Paul’s letter he reminds the church in Philippi to take a stand against this kind of pressure. Paul reminds them that they are first and foremost citizens of heaven. (*Philippians 3:20*)

Vs. 22

If you were a church planter moving into the city of Philippi, you might assume that God’s plan for this city was just about over. One would never imagine Paul and Silas’ next conversion to Christ would be the jailor.

6. The Great Commission is our purpose, always to be the focus of our actions *Matthew 28:19* “... as you are going ...”

Vs. 24 – “*put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*”

The jailor was not just afraid they will escape, he was also interested in torturing them further. Their backs have been beaten bloody and now he adds his own touch to these Jews, he puts their feet in stocks. The Greek word “stocks” refers to a Roman instrument of torture. It was a long block of wood with numerous holes so that, depending on their height and build, their legs would stretched apart as far as possible until their tendons and joints would be terribly stretched, and then their feet would be locked into position. To lie down would bring even more excruciating pain from their lacerated backs and bloody wounds.

A person doesn’t sing with open wounds, legs bond causing severe pain, while facing an unknown future in prison, not to mention it was midnight. Paul is about to demonstrate what he will write about 10 years later in his letter for the Philippian church when they faced persecution and poverty. Paul encouraged them in *Philippians 4:4*, “. . . rejoice in the Lord always . . . and again I say, rejoice.” God gives us human examples for our encouragement.

Vs. 27 – “*when the jailor woke and saw that the prison doors were opened he drew his sword and was about to kill himself.*”

The Roman code of Justinian declared if a jailor allowed a criminal to escape he would be given their punishment which was death. Obviously then, there were some prisoners on death row – perhaps they included Paul and Silas.

How do we know the jailor wasn’t listening, lying in bed, growing under conviction by their singing at midnight? Because verse 27 informs us that he awoke *after* the earthquake and after all the prisoner’s chains had been loosed. From this text some time elapsed between the prisoners being freed and the jailor being awakened.

Vs. 30 – “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*”

Something dramatic has happened, not just in the loosing of their bonds, but in the actions of all these inmates. The gospel message is indeed *supernatural*. Application # 6 (i.e. The Great Commission)

Vs. 32-34

Notice the immediate change in the heart of the jailor after his conversion. When people experience a real conversion there is an immediate and long term change of heart.

7. The power of the gospel message changes lives and behavior.

Vs. 35-40

The magistrates finally get Paul and Silas to leave town, but not after Paul receives an apology for having been beaten without a fair trial – for he was, to their great horror, a Roman citizen too. He did that to protect this growing congregation and keep them from immediate harm, at least for the time being.

Ten years later Paul writes this congregation a letter. These first charter members represented three different nationalities; Asiatic, Greek, and Roman. They were from three different levels of society. The entire empire was represented by these three people. This wasn’t a coincidence. It is redeemed sinners who find forgiveness in Christ and a church family where the ground is level and grace binds our hearts together and to our Lord, the chief shepherd of His church.