

## Bibles???

### The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 16

We are continuing through our verse by verse study through the book of Acts.

As we see the work of the Holy Spirit among the early church.

This evening we are going to continue to study about the events that happened during Paul 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey

Let's pray...

**6 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. 7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. 8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.**

So you might remember from our study last week that the Holy Spirit had put a burden in the heart of Paul to go back to the cities that he and Barnabas had sheared the gospel.

Paul wanted to see how they were doing, to see how they were growing in Christ and bring help and encouragement to them.

However, there was a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas – and they split.

So Paul takes along Silas along with him and we finished our study where they picked up young Timothy to continue on the journey with them.

Luke tells us that Timothy was well spoken of by the believers – So Paul wants him to come along – the only thing that Paul did before they headed out was that he circumcised Timothy – so that it wouldn't be a deal breaker when he shared the gospel with the Jews.

So they set out to go to the next region, Asia –

This is the area known as Asia Minor – Western Turkey.

The place where Asia and Europe meet

So as they head through Asia, the Holy Spirit forbid them from preaching in Asia.

“Ok” Paul said, we can't preach the gospel in Asia, let's go up by the Black Sea to Bythania”

And once again – the Holy Spirit intervened and did not permit them.

We would not usually think that God would “forbid” anyone to preach His word anywhere.

But that is exactly what we have here. Twice.

Now, the scriptures do not provide us with how the Holy Spirit prevented them from preaching there.

It could have been by prophetic word – remember at the beginning of Acts 13, it was through certain prophets that Holy Spirit gave the command to separate Paul and Barnabas for the work that they were called upon.

We were told previously that Silas was a prophet –

It could have been through a vision or a dream

It could have been an impression from the Lord

Or it could have been through certain circumstances – maybe it was an illness or maybe they were just not received in these two areas.

The important thing was that Paul was able to discern that God had closed the door to this region – at least temporarily.

Church

Sometimes the things that seem like a “no brainer” (“like sharing the gospel”) aren’t really what God wants at that moment.

Sometimes God answers our prayers by simply replying “no”.

And we have to remember that **sometimes** when God says “no”, it simply a “not yet”

You see, the gospel will eventually be preached in Asia, even by Paul – himself, just not at this time – he was going to have to wait until God said, “go”

By the way, the churches in Revelation – they are from this region.

You see, God wanted them to leave Asia for the time being & head over to Europe across the Aegean Sea

God had been at work preparing the soil of Macedonia for the Gospel & the time was ripe.

So the Holy Spirit guided Paul out of Asia Minor.

Church, it will occasionally happen in our lives when following the Lord may seem confusing.

We'll be going along, doing really well with the Lord, even being in the center of His will, when all of a sudden, things seem to fall apart & we were sure we were on the right path and suddenly find ourselves at what appears to be a dead end.

We don't know where we are heading and as we wait, God will give us new direction.

The important thing to remember church is that our plans are not always God's plans.

When He closes doors – we need to respect the closed doors and not try to break them down – because doing so; will only result in frustration and trouble.

Paul waited – he didn't try to break the door open and the Holy Spirit gave him new direction.

**9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately **we** sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.**

So Paul is in Troas and he receives a vision.

He sees a man of Macedonia –

Remember, Paul had wanted to preach the gospel in Asia Minor – but God guided him to Greece instead.

Now, I asked you to make a note of the word “we”

The question is – who is “we”

Paul, Silas, Timothy and now you have Dr. Luke joining the team.

By the way, some people believe that the man from Macedonia was Dr. Luke – it may or may not be.

**11 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next [day] came to Neapolis, 12 and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, **a colony**. And we were staying in that city for some days.**

So here, Paul arrives to Philippi.

This is the place where he is going to establish a church.

I had you make a note that Philippi was a colony –

A Roman colony was a city that had been granted special privileges by Rome because of some service it had rendered.

It meant that those people in the empire who were blessed with Roman citizenship enjoyed the same rights and privileges that they would have if they were living in Rome.

**Keep this in mind...**

In addition Luke called Philippi the foremost city of that part of Macedonia.

It wasn't the capital, but it was the most important city in the region.

**13 And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met [there].**

So, upon arriving in Philippi, Paul begins to ask direction to the local synagogue – after all, that is the pattern that Paul had been following up to now –

He would go to the synagogue and speak.

However, he finds out there is no synagogue in Philippi.

That means that according to Jewish customs – there were not even 10 Jewish men in Philippi.

Because that was the requirement to have a synagogue in a city.

So they went to the riverside and found only a few women there – these were probably ladies who'd married Greek & Romans & settled there in Philippi.

Paul therefore begins to preach the gospel to these women.

**14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard [us]. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.**

Lydia was a seller of purple.

That means she was a textile merchant.

Thyatira was known for its fine wool and expensive purple dye that it would extract from shellfish.

So, Lydia would travel to Philippi to sell it.

Lydia was one of the many God-fearing Gentiles who went to synagogue to hear the teaching of the word, or in this case to the riverside on the Sabbath.

Because she was a seeker of truth, when Paul preached, she recognized it as truth & received it.

Now, interestingly – Thyatira is in the region that the Holy Spirit prevented Paul from preaching – so it is interesting that the first convert in Philippi is a woman from Thyatira.

**15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged [us], saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.**

Note that her faith in Jesus affected her entire household – they too were baptized with her.

The significance of Lydia is that she is the first convert in Europe.

And as the small seed was planted, it fell on fertile soil in the hearts of Lydia and her family and from there it spread to others in Philippi

Lydia's house would become an early meeting place of the church in Philippi.

**16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of **divination** met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.**

So as Paul and the guys are going back to the river to pray –

They meet a demon possessed slave girl that was telling people their fortunes for a fee.

Now, first of all, the bible forbids us from playing around with this kind of thing.

**Lev 19:26b nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying.**

As believers, we should avoid any practice related to divination, including fortune-telling, astrology, witchcraft, tarot cards, anything having to do with communicating with the dead, and spell-casting.

The second thing I want to point out is that Satan and his demons are not All Knowing, like God is.

Demons do not know the future.

So what happens during divination is that one is communicating with demons – the demons will then reveal something about that individual – something no one else would know. And then they start deceiving people.

As believers, we are not to fear the spirits involved in divination; neither are we to seek wisdom from them. Our wisdom comes from God.

**17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." 18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the**

**spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.**

The demon possessed girl followed Paul and the gang for several days.

Notice that the girl actually is speaking the truth about Paul and the guys.

They were servants of the Most High God, who proclaimed the way of salvation.

But notice what the demon said – it said the word “us”

The girl was making herself one with them by the word “us”.

Satan will always try and join himself to the work of God if he can.

That is why Paul had to stop it.

The Jews knew divination was wrong – if Paul allowed the girl to continue to draw attention to herself, it would have hindered the gospel from being preached.

It was the same thing that we saw with Timothy and the circumcision -

So Paul get annoyed and casts the demon out.

Demons cannot possess a believer,

[1Jo 4:4 NKJV] 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.

So lets see what how her masters respond.

**19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged [them] into the marketplace to the authorities. 20 And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; 21 "and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe." 22 Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded [them] to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw [them] into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.**

The little girl's masters – they see that their income has been cut off.

Their golden goose is incapable of laying anymore eggs.

Notice that they only cared about their pocketbook and could care less about the girls well-being.

They want Paul and Silas to pay for what they did.

So they take them to the authorities and falsely accuse them of disturbing the peace.

In the book of Acts, we find only two instances where we find Gentiles initiating hostile action against Paul.

Here in Philippi and later on in Ephesus.

In both instances, it was as a result of the loss of money.

So Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned.

Think about for a moment how they feel.

Here they were being obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit

They had been obedient in preaching the gospel and a family has responded.

A young girl has been freed from the bondage of being possessed by a demon.

Yet, they have endure punishment and humiliation

And now find themselves locked up in a dark stinky prison.

I am pretty sure that many of us if not all would be complaining to God

However, that's not what Paul and Silas did.

**25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.**

Isn't this convicting???

Where we'd expect Paul & Silas to be upset & complaining, they're worshipping & praising God.

They don't blame Him for letting them down.

They don't doubt His love & care.

No, they trust that in the midst of it all, God is still working out His perfect plan

They recognized that plan doesn't always lead through gentle meadows filled with fragrant flowers.

Sometimes it leads through a dark, stinking prison cell.

As Paul & Silas worshipped, the other prisoners listened – & were confronted with a whole new way of looking at adversity.

Turn to Matt 5

**[Mat 5:10-12 NKJV] 10 Blessed [are] those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great [is] your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

Paul and Silas could actually look at the trouble they were in and know that they were acquiring rewards in heaven.

They were serving their King and felt honored to suffer if it meant that the kingdom was enlarged.

**26 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 loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.**

The reason for this drastic action on the part of the jailor was because he was responsible for the prisoners in his area.

If a prisoner escaped, then the jailor would have to serve the escaped prisoners sentence.

If someone was awaiting execution and he escaped, then the jailor would have to serve his sentence.

When the jailor saw the prison gates standing wide, he just assumed all the prisoners had fled.

**28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." 29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"**

To the jailor, there is no reason that a prisoner wouldn't have bailed when given the opportunity.

There was no reason for Paul and Silas to remain in prison except for one reason – and that was, concern for the welfare of the jailor.

Not only did they stay there, the other prisoners all stayed as well.

Church -

We think that for others to be impressed by Jesus, they need to see something miraculously good in our lives.

What they need to see is how we handle difficulty, like the songs we sing at midnight.

That is what led the jailor to ask how he can be saved.

**31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed [their] stripes. And immediately he and all his [family] were baptized. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household. 35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go."**

The magistrates have no idea of what went on at night.

In their minds, after receiving a good whippin and spending a night in jail – that would be enough to put the fear in Paul and Silas. That would show them.

So they send word to release Paul and Silas.

**36 So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace." 37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, [and] have thrown [us] into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out."**

Paul says, we are not going anywhere.

We were entitled to a full and fair trial.

We didn't get neither.

Also, as a Roman citizen, we have rights – you violated our rights by beating us.

All Paul had to do was file a complaint with the proper Roman officials & these guys would have been history & they knew it.

Moreover, a Roman could not be expelled from a Roman city

**38 And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. 39 Then they came and pleaded with them and brought [them] out, and asked [them] to depart from the city. 40 So they went out of the prison and entered [the house of] Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.**

Now, the reason that Paul confronted the magistrates was not because he was being petty or being vindictive.

He was not trying to exact revenge.

You see, what Paul was doing here was – he knew that the church in Philippi was going to have to deal with these same guys.

So he made sure they were put on notice that they'd better wise up & back off.

They owed a huge debt to Paul's silence, a debt they could pay by leaving the Church alone.

Do with me what you want – but you better watch your step when it comes to my brothers and sisters in Christ.

That was Paul's attitude.

And that is why the Lord was able to use him in extraordinary ways.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'