

## Refuge City Church — August 7, 2022

### “Prison to Peace” [Acts 16:16-40]

#### Introduction

- **Last time:** Paul and his team reach Philippi by the sovereignty of God.
  - They meet Lydia, share the gospel, and the very beginning of a new church is established.
- **Today:** In a connected series of events, Paul has further interactions with the people and leadership in this Roman colony.
  - In contrast to the peaceful riverside conversations, we now have demon possession, persecution, beating, imprisonment, and suicide prevention!
- **THINK** about this as we study God’s Word this morning:
  - Your view of God will unequivocally determine your outlook on life.

#### Verses 16-24

“As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, “These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.” The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.”

- On a day they were traveling to the riverside [remember, no synagogue], the team is harassed by a young slave girl who is demon-possessed.
  - “Spirit of divination”: one who gives oracles/fortune-tellers/Medium.
  - **Leviticus 19:31**, “Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God.”
- The enemy will not relent when his “proclaimed territory” is in danger.
  - **Matthew 16:18**, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”
  - [Remember on the island of Cyprus] **Acts 13:8**, “But Elymas the magician...opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.”
- See the slight of hand used by the devil?
  - What he was saying through the girl was true. But for what intent?
- Paul’s team *did not* need advertising, and had they let it go [accepted it], they could have been caught siding with the devil and hurt this new church.
  - This is exactly how the enemy gets us comfortable to compromise what we believe in... he tells half-truths [Genesis 3; the half truth of original sin]

- Notice how Paul responds to this evil spirit; “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.”
  - The girl mentioned “the Most High God”.
  - Had Paul rebuked the evil spirit in the the name of God, that could have brought confusion... “What god are you talking about??”
    - Greek mythology: hundreds of gods; Zeus being their god of gods. [Roman king of all gods = Jupiter]
    - But Paul responds with the name that is above every other name!
      - **Micah 4:5**, “For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.”
      - **Philippians 2:10-11**, “so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
  - Once enslaved to the enemy, this girl is set free in Jesus’ name!
    - Potentially found a new life/home/community/purpose in this new church.
- The girl’s owners pronounced judgement on Paul and Silas based on personal grievance [loss of income], racial discrimination [Jews], and Roman law [worshipping foreign gods].
  - The crowd turned into a mob and joined in the efforts.
  - Paul and Silas are beaten with rods and thrown into prison.
  - Hmm...who else was convicted by lies and a mob, persecuted, and beaten??

## Verse 25

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,”

- In the midst of their persecution, after having been beaten, they pray and sing!
  - **Philippians 2:17**, “Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.”
  - **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in *all* circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
  - **Psalms 42:8**, “By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.”
- How can we do this?!
  - It will unequivocally depend on your view of God.
  - Who is He? What do you know about Him? Do you trust in Him and His promises?
    - God is spirit [John 4:24]; God is love [1 John 4:8]; God is good [Mark 10:18]; God is just [Psalm 7:11]; God is faithful [2 Corinthians 1:18]; God is light [1 John 1:5]; God is near [Psalm 34:18]; God is great and holy [Psalm 77:13]
  - *Knowledge births intimacy*. The more you get to know God, the more intimate/close that relationship will be.
    - As believers, we *partake* in His nature, thus bringing about connectivity.

- **2 Peter 1:3-4 NLT**, “By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.”
- *Intimacy births joy*. The more *intimate* the relationship, the more joy you’ll have knowing God cares for you.
  - **Psalm 16:11**, “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”
- **Romans 8:28**, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

### Verses 26-34

“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 bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.”

- This jailer had his whole life committed to his work, that at the moment of failure, he decided to end his life, and Paul *immediately* sense’s this man’s need for love.
- Consider the circumstances of what this man witnessed:
  - He saw their unjust conviction.
  - He witnessed, or at least heard of, their joy, prayers, and praise while in prison.
  - He felt the earthquake, and was immediately in a mode of panic and fear, until Paul reassured him that his job was not in jeopardy.
  - When he felt love and compassion, he asked *the* most important question, “What must I do to be saved?”
    - REMEMBER what Peter offered the lame man in Chapter 3? Salvation in Jesus’ name [**Acts 3:6**, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!”]
- **Verse 31**: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...”
  - “Believe” = accept; trust; rely on; commit; *throw myself on as stable and trustworthy* [1900 ft mining gap in Arizona]
  - He was going to throw himself on his sword, because he believed that would solve all his problems.
  - But what he needed to do is throw himself on the One who already died for him and his family.

- **John 14:6**, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” [John 10:10]
- **Romans 10:9-13**, “because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”
- What do we see in this circumstance? The jailer went from...
  - Humanly: Control to chaos. Strength to weakness. Life to desiring death.
  - Spiritually: Hopeless to hope. Unbelief to belief. Prison to peace. Death to life. Sorrow to joy... That is what Jesus does for us!
    - MAYBE, like Lydia and this newly freed slave girl, the jailer and his family join this new Philippian church community.

### **Verses 35-40 [Conclusion]**

“But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, “Let those men go.” And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace.” But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.” The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.”

- Paul and Silas reveal their Roman citizenship at this time. Why not before?
  - Holy Spirit inspired for the salvation of the jailer and his family.
  - Protection of this new church.
    - There is no longer any suspicion as to the actions of Paul and Silas in that community. Only strength and resolve of their actions in town that will leave a lasting impact and testimony through Lydia, the now freed girl, and the jailer and his family!
- Does this provide you a deeper desire to know God to a greater degree?
  - What can a deeper knowledge and trust in God provide? [See Lydia and the jailer. See Paul and Silas in prison.]
  - In whatever circumstance you're in, trust in the Lord. He has given you salvation in Jesus' name!
  - Throw yourself on, as He is stable and trustworthy!
  - Give others a reason to believe by the way you live your life, and how you respond when bad things happen.