

Let's open our Bibles tonight to Acts 16:11.

Last week, we began with Paul and Barnabas returning from Jerusalem in Acts 15, where there was a council meeting to make a church decision early on in the church about salvation that is through faith alone. Many of the Jews getting saved and hearing that the Gentiles had now come to the Lord were demanding that these Gentiles first become Jews, being that God had chosen them. Back in Antioch in Syria where Paul had come out of years of being out of the limelight in his hometown, then being found there by Barnabas, and brought to Antioch - this church in Syria became the center for world missions. Paul's heart was stirred to go out again and to find out how the churches were doing that he had visited on his first trip out. And so getting back home from that meeting in Jerusalem, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go again and see how the churches are doing." Barnabas wanted to take his nephew, John Mark, with him; he had gone on the first journey - he had given up early. Paul saw him as a hindrance; Barnabas saw him as a soul that needed to be encouraged. They couldn't agree. Barnabas took off with John Mark, went to Cyprus where Barnabas grew up; began ministering there. Paul took a man that had come from Jerusalem, from the meeting, to bear witness to the decision that grace is how salvation comes to all men. And a fellow named Silas would join Paul, and they would team up and go on what was the longest missionary journey that Paul would take.

We've sought, as we've gone through the Scriptures, to (especially in the book of Acts) give you some maps, some times, some places, some dates, some distances so you can get a feel for the effort. We have these maps in the back on pages. If you don't have one, pick one up on your way out at the counter. But we'll be using them for the next quite a few weeks, all the way through chapter 20.

Paul's first missionary journey took place in 46 and 47 A.D. - two years. It was almost all in Galatia. His second missionary journey started about three years later in 50 A.D. It would last almost six years. He would travel some 2700 miles, visiting the same places he had gone on the first trip, which was only about 1200 or so, and then being led by the Lord far beyond where he had gone the first time. If you haven't been with us, all of the studies are available online. They are also

archived there; they're also available in the book store. I don't think that this is a book you don't want to know; you want to know how God used the early church, how God's Spirit moved upon the saints, and how God wants to use you to continue this work in our generation.

Here's what we did last week, as Paul began this second trip. Paul went to Antioch in Syria. He went from Antioch in Syria (you can find it on your map there, to the right where the star is) north to the Cilician Gate; it's about 140 miles, a left turn. Went to Derbe, 100 more miles. Thirty more miles to Lystra; 30 more miles to Iconium. Went 85 miles almost due west to Antioch. Went to Phrygia, which is a province, 200 miles. Spent a long time trying to figure out where God wanted him to go. After he got to Antioch in Pisidia, they really hadn't gone any further. They tried to go north and south; God said no to both. And so they struggled for more than a couple of days, trying to find God's will. We talked a little bit last week about it's so good to see a guy like Paul and his team - not sure what the Lord wanted them to do but sure that they wanted to do whatever the Lord wanted. They finally ran out of real estate at Troas. God spoke to Paul, there in Troas, and he had a vision that said, "Come to Macedonia. We need you here." They had been forbidden to go to Bithynia, which is in the north; they had been forbidden by the Lord to go to the west. They would go to all those places on the third journey but not this one. God had very specific choices for Paul and his team to make. But it was hard to find what God wanted them to do. They picked Timothy up in the Lystra area. They circumcised him because his father was a Greek, even though Paul knew that that didn't help you. It was interesting that Paul was concerned about the Jewish audience that he was facing. He made the right, I think, decision. They picked up Luke, the physician, in Troas there on the coast before Paul got this vision, and then they headed over to Philippi. They sailed from Troas to Samothrace, which is an island 75 miles or so, and then another 75 miles to the port city, and then 10 more miles inland to Philippi. So, for the first time the gospel was going to Europe - to Greece, Macedonia, if you will. So, it took months for them to figure out where to go. When the Lord showed them, they went immediately. I think they were excited about what they were going to find. And what we find is, as we read the narrative (and I think we've mentioned to you several times), the narrative is what God wants you to know about the first thirty years of the early church. So when you get the information, you want to look at it and say, "What am I supposed to learn from this? And why is this here and this isn't there? And why is this left out?" And so you find this striving of these men trying to find God's will; and then, when they find it, running with great haste and

joy - in two days making the crossing over to Macedonia. And when they arrived, I can only imagine that they come there with great anticipation, and they wanted God to do great things. And, in reality, I don't know how long they were there - weeks, months maybe; the fruit was very small, and the reaction not without payment and suffering. And I think that they, both of them, looked at each other - Silas and Paul - and say, "Are you sure this is where the Lord wanted you? The guy from Macedonia didn't say, 'Go over there somewhere,' did he? Did we make a mistake?" But here's a work that God began in Europe, and it's an important lesson.

There are three conversions that the Bible covers in Philippi, in Europe, for the first stop. We'll look at two of them tonight; we'll take the third one next week. But I think the lesson from Philippi is this - God can reach anyone. God can reach anyone. And you should know that if you're praying for a family member who you just figure they'll never get saved When I got saved, I had friends that said, "We thought you'd be the last guy to ever get saved." Well, that's not true. God has a way of reaching all of us.

Well let's look at verse 11, where we start with them in Troas, and it says, "Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, 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." Like I said, 70 miles halfway, 70 more miles. By the way, this Samothrace place that Paul stopped at - in the 1st century, it was an island that was about 500' out of the water; that was it. It was a place of tremendous cultic religion - really weird stuff (you can look it up for yourself) in the 1st century. You would have thought, "Well, maybe Paul will stop there." But the Lord hadn't told him to stop there. He said, "Come to Macedonia." And Paul, as much as he might have wanted to be drawn to that place that certainly needed the gospel, seemed to just pass it by. The word "straight course" in verse 11 is a nautical term that means that the winds were favorable, and more importantly, the Lord was clear in His direction. And so, after many weeks or months of frustration and stops and hindrances by the Lord (we're not told how), they were finally happy to just get moving. It's not always so easy to determine where the Lord wants you. I think they might have argued with each other, "Hey, we can stay here. There's a lot to be done here." But if you're listening to the Lord, then you want to make sure that you go where God wants you to be. Two days to cross this, according to our Scriptures here (verse 11), and favorable winds. I mention that because, when we get to chapter 20:6, they're going to make this trip again, and it's going to take five days with all

kinds of peril. In chapter 20:6, these men were also right where God wanted them to be. They were right where God wanted them to be here; they were right where God wanted them to be there. And so the only lesson I can get with the two of them is - smooth sailing does not necessarily constitute you're in the will of God. You're in the will of God when you know what the will of God is. And no matter what, then, you run into - smooth sailing or rough seas - that doesn't matter; you've got to go where God calls you to be. I wouldn't just let easiness or an ease of ministry dictate to you this must be the Lord because sometimes you're right where it is the hardest. This was easy; in chapter 20:6, it is going to be far more difficult.

So they go inland, verse 12. The inland road from the coast to Philippi was along the Via Egnatia, the Roman road. If you've been to Israel even or you've been through Italy, you know that there are stones today that are worn by centuries of exposure that were built by the Romans during the time of the Roman Empire; and you can still see some of them today, not the least of which is along this coast. Philippi was named after Philip II. He was of Macedon. Philip II was Alexander the Great's father. It was here that Marc Antony and Octavian, who changed his name later to Caesar Augustus (he was in command when Jesus was born), fought Cassius (you might remember) and Brutus to avenge the death of Julius Caesar. So that all happened here. The area was known as a Roman colony; the Greeks ran it for generations. They were overthrown in 168 B.C. It was called the Springs in history; if you look back until that time, there were lots of springs in the area, and then it was named after Philip. So, when the Romans took it over, they named it after Philip. And notice that Luke points out it was the "foremost city" in this district because Macedonia in the 1st century was divided into four districts, and Philippi was the first and the largest of them. And then we also read it was a "colony." It's important that you know that in the Bible sense because Rome, when they defeated places, would colonize them; they would bring into defeated areas former generals and police officers and soldiers and politicians who had retired, and they would put them in charge of these colonies. They would offer them free land and no taxes in exchange for their service to kind of keep the peace. If you were born in a colony, you were born as a free-born Roman citizen. That was Paul's benefit, God's blessing. And it also happened to Silas. So that'll figure in prominently in the stories that we're going to be facing. But, needless to say, Paul was familiar with the colony issue as well as the Roman oversight. Notice, in verse 12, that when they arrived in Europe, they didn't get to work right away; they seemed to just be standing around for a while. We're just told that they were

there for a while. Spirit-filled, road-weary saints bringing the gospel to Europe but not knowing at all where to start or what to do. And so I'm sure they got their bearings; they probably surveyed the city for synagogues, which was always their first goal; go to the Jews, get a foothold with those who knew the Bible, and then reach out to the Gentiles. So maybe they walked around for prayer. Maybe they were so used to running around going, "What next, Lord?" they were just doing that.

We are told, in verse 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. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul." According to Jewish law, a synagogue had to be built in every town where there were at least ten adult Jewish men living; that was the practice. So we make the assumption that in this city, Philippi, there weren't ten adult Jewish men. In fact, there seemed to be so few Jews here that the only Jewish congregation that Paul could find was some ladies who gathered outside of town on the Sabbath, along the river to pray together. I don't know what Paul's expectation was in arriving in this town - after having a vision, after months of searching - but I doubt it was this. "We're gonna move the world!" There're a couple women praying on the Sabbath. I don't suspect that that was anything more than humble beginnings. And I don't know if he was disappointed; I would guess that he was not. Only because it seemed to me Paul could care less. He just seemed to go through every door with a hope and a vision. But I wrote in my Bible on this verse - Zechariah 4:10 which says, "You should never despise the days of small things." If you're looking to serve the Lord, and things aren't blossoming as quickly as you like, that was certainly the case for Paul here as the gospel is being introduced to Europe. A must lesson if you ever want to see great things in ministry is be willing to share wherever God puts you. I've had a policy over the years - and I didn't need to practice it for a while and now, with the radio, I have to - of going wherever I'm invited to go speak. I don't ask, "How many people are there?" or, "Can you pay me?" or, "How am I gonna get there?" I just go. If the date's open, I go. We have plenty of people who want to come here to minister if you tell them how much you'll pay them, how many people will be attending. "Will my name be in any kind of advertising?" "Are you gonna put us out there?" And our answer's usually, "I thought you'd want to just come and bless our people." So, it's not always the easiest path to take to say, "Lord, whatever You want." You know? I flew to - I won't even tell you where. I just flew for a long

way. I don't want you to figure it out. It cost us \$1800. We didn't get paid at all, and we came home. And that was all right because we said, "Lord, we're gonna go wherever You said." Now, I thought about that twice after that happened and thought, "Well, maybe I should ask." But I've just decided it is worth just serving the Lord. I'd rather go broke serving the Lord than trying to make that all work out, you know? So, small things. Just go where God puts you, and be willing. And I like Paul. He said, "Well, that's where God's gonna start us. That's the practice we follow." In Jewish society, certainly in Paul's day, women held a place of very low esteem. The Pharisees, the rabbis certainly, would never speak to a woman in public or in a crowd. Paul was glad to ignore all of those ungodly practices and speak to these ladies about the grace of Jesus. Paul's the one that wrote to the Galatians (that's where he had been before he came to Europe) that we are "neither Jew nor Gentile or male or female or bond or free; we're all one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28). We've been born again. We've put on Christ. We're new people. And so that was Paul's idea. Certainly male superiority is not a biblical concept; it's a worldly one, and it's a poor one. Jesus was certainly the greatest women's liberator of all time, I think, in the Bible. But he went out to the river on a Sabbath and found some ladies sitting there and praying together.

Verse 14 tells us about this woman in particular. We're told quite a bit about her. She's going to be the first convert in Europe. Her name was probably not Lydia. I know it says in your Bible her name was Lydia. She came from Thyatira, which is Asia Minor, which is a province of Lydia; and the Greek can certainly read a woman from Lydia. So we're not so sure that that was her name. Thyatira is an interesting place because if you go back on your map, it is near Bithynia, where Paul had tried to go but was unable to go. The town was known, in her day, for their expensive dyes. They took them out of shellfish. They applied them to clothes. They marked them up with great mark-ups. It had a pocket logo with a shellfish. It did. Nothing new under the sun. So it would appear, then, she was a representative of a company back home. She lived here in Philippi at the time. She was very successful in her business, and she owned a home here in town as well. And notice that we are told that she was a "worshipper of God." It's a very particular phrase in the Bible because it doesn't mean she was saved; it just means that she was a Gentile who had joined the Jews in their worship of one God as opposed to the multiplicity of gods that everyone else worshipped. She believed in a one-God, if you will, belief of God - that there was only one God. But she hadn't converted to all of the legalistic practices. So, like Cornelius, like the eunuch on the way home that the Lord went to speak to, Lydia had found in her heart that

the idea of one God, a true God, was truly the thing. It had brought her to Judaism. But she was just hungry to know God. Her heart was ready, but that's all that she knew, and that's all that she had been told. Notice in verse 14 that, when Paul began to speak to her about the things of the Lord, God "opened her heart" to hear what Paul had to say. Here's a great insight, I think, and it should be a phrase that you, maybe, should remember into the way that the Lord works. People do not get saved because of your intelligent, clear presentation. They don't get saved because of your logic. They don't get saved because of your emotional appeal. They get saved because you give them God's Word, and the Holy Spirit opens their heart. And that's really good to know. It started that way in Europe, right from the beginning. Paul was willing to share. Luke was willing to write, "Yeah, the Lord opened her heart." And I think that we should look at everything we do in terms of sharing our faith in that way because the tools that God uses are the saints filled with the Spirit, preaching the Word of God. And it never goes out void (Isaiah 55:11). And that way both the work and the fruit are to God's glory, not to you and me. And I think that that takes a lot of pressure off of both of us. And it's an amazing thought, isn't it, that that is the way that God works. So Paul speaks, the Holy Spirit knocks, the heart is opened, and Lydia receives the Lord and is saved. Now, years later down the road, and we're not there yet, there will be a church founded in Thyatira, her home town. Maybe she was a part of that. Maybe she went home, took her family and the folks that she had serving in her household, and maybe they were an active part of that. We're not told. We just know that the church shows up there in what is fairly an area that we don't have much coverage for, at least early on, from the Acts accounts. I love the lengths that God goes to see people get saved. Paul gets here, hitting his head against every possible wall on the way over. Right? He would have kept going if there hadn't have been the ocean. He was pretty much determined. She ends up here because she's relocated for business needs. And then they meet together at a river, and God opens her heart, and she opens her heart to the Lord, and she gets saved. And then there's this opening for the team, down the road, to begin to minister from her house and from her family. It's pretty amazing to watch God work. I love to just imagine how God is going to work in our lives like that.

We read, in verse 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." Apparently she went home, shared her faith with her family - with her household servants. We suspect, because of what's written, some time goes by. It's hard to say to somebody two days after you get saved, "Hey, if

you've proven me to be faithful....." You might say, "Well, it's been 48 hours. So far you're doin' okay." But whatever the length of time, her behavior was such that her conversion was genuine. Jesus said, "You'll know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16-20), and Paul waited long enough. Remember, he's on this travel for six years. He waited long enough to be convinced that her relationship with God was the real deal. This isn't the first family to get saved in the accounts; it's not the last family either. You remember (in chapter 10) that Cornelius and his family came to the Lord. At the end of this chapter, we'll see a jailer with his family come to the Lord. In Acts 18, we'll read of a head of a synagogue, a rabbi named Crispus, whose family and he will also come to the Lord. Paul will mention even more families and households in chapter 1 that he writes to the Corinthians. But I love the picture because what you find, again going through the narrative to try to learn, is that God seems to get the heart of one in a family, and pretty soon the dominoes begin to fall. So if you're the only one tonight that is saved in your household, you're a domino. And God's going to use you. And it happens constantly. Right? You become a witness and an example, and there's responsibility, but there's great joy. And if one, like I said, gets saved in the family my mom and dad got saved years after I did, and there were some really trying times. But they got saved before they died. And it took years, but God was faithful. There's this domino effect, I think. And so if you have some folks in your family that aren't doing well with the Lord, I'd be really encouraged. God tends to work through the one, doesn't He? He gets one in the family. It's very economical. Just get one in the family, and go to work with them. I know there're a lot of things that fight that today - the divided family, the ability to move around to different areas is so much easier, the lack of family commitment. But God does a great work still to this day. So I don't know how long of a period Lydia walked with the Lord, and her household did, with Jesus. But when she was able to say to the boys, "Look, if I've been faithful, if you see in me the work of God, would you come and minister and stay with us and work?" this becomes the home church, if you will. They were persuaded that she was indeed good at what she did and was walking with the Lord. The word "persuaded" is an interesting word because it almost says she was a good salesman. So maybe that's what she did; she put pressure on the boys, and maybe they didn't want to barge in, but, "All right. We'll come." And Europe has its first converted family to listen to and observe.

The second conversion in town, in verse 16, happened entirely differently. We read, "Now it happened, as we went to prayer," (we don't know where or when) "that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought

her masters much profit by fortune-telling." In the first example, there was a religious woman who had come a long way towards the God of the Bible. Here's a young slave girl possessed by the devil. Both of them are set free by the Lord; not a problem for Him. We can find examples in the Bible to come and approximate your life as well, that God saves the likes of us. But this woman is an interesting story. She's young, she is a slave, she is owned by people who make profit from her possession through her fortune-telling. She's treated as a possession, not a person at all. No one involved in her life seems to care for her personally, and she's tormented; and yet she is used. In the Bible, slavery is one of those horrible injustices of the society and of sinful man. I should point out to you - and I'll do it as an aside, it's not intended to be talked about tonight - you will not find Jesus or Paul addressing, from a political standpoint, slavery. You think that, maybe the way activism is today, you would find that. What you find is Paul saying (Ephesians 6:5, 1 Peter 2:18), "Hey, if you're a slave, be a good one because we're all slaves to the Lord anyway. So be subjected to your master whether they're a good master or they're a horrible one." You find this call to be submissive to the Lord, and rather than dealing with social ills (and let's protest and let's gather together), Jesus did the same thing that Paul did. He ministered to the spiritual man. Because when it gets right down to it, if we ever hope to have people treat each other well, we're going to have to be right with God. If we're not right with God, make any rule that you want; people will break it because sin has that way - whether it is race relations or abortion or the removal of drugs or pornography. Whatever it is, ultimately the solution is Jesus in the lives of the people. Because you may have been involved with a lot of those things, and now you're not because Jesus came into your life. You've been changed. The answer is always the same - Jesus is sufficient to meet men's needs.

So when you watch Jesus or the early church minister, they didn't get off the rails with social issues; they focused on the spiritual needs of men. And it becomes the answer that we can hope for. I always worry about churches that get in the pulpits to root on political candidates. I'll never do it because I think the church is called to preach the gospel of Jesus. There's only one name I want to preach under. And let's face it. There've been plenty of candidates people have gone out on the rails for who fall right on their faces, and then you go, "Oh, that wasn't the Lord, was it?" So, you want that, you can't come here. Yeah, you can stay, but you're not gonna hear it from me. I think about that letter that Paul wrote to the slave owner, Philemon. And the only thing he references is the spiritual change that came along in this slave's life - Onesimus - that he was imprisoned with. And he

didn't address the inhumanity of slavery because it's inhumane; it's not godly, it's sin in its worst form. But it is the product of sinfulness of man. So all that Paul said about this slave was, "Hey, he came to know Jesus, and he is right with God." You go back in your Bible, and you begin reading with Adam and Eve, and the minute they fell from the grace of God and they rebelled against God, you will find (in the next seven or eight chapters in the book of *Genesis*) every sin and wickedness known to man: murder and hatefulness. The society's woes - the one that we live in today, that everyone is so upset about - they're not politically caused, they're not social in nature, they are spiritual. The root of our problems is spiritual. We set God out of the school, out of our life, out of our prayers. We just set God aside, and then we look around. Well, this is what we get! Because we're trying it without Him. So you won't find, in the Scriptures, a lot of dealing with social issues as much as you'll find what Paul does - in this case - the dealing with spiritual issues. Because our answer - the best answer you and I have for this world - is Christ. Get saved, man. Come to Jesus. Repent of your sins. Let His Spirit rule your life. If enough lives are changed, we'll vote for the right things, and we'll do the right things. And you don't need too many laws when there's love. But if there's no love, you need all kinds of laws and then all kinds of prisons as well.

So, to the owners, this woman was a meal ticket with no rights, no love. She was able to tell fortunes by this spirit that lived within her. She was a commodity. She was used for gain. Think of the pornographer today, using these women and men on the screen. They're used for gain. So this girl, we read, was "possessed with a spirit of divination." The word "*pythia*" is a word that means (in Greek mythology) the serpent; it was a serpent in a place called Delphi in Greek mythology that was killed by Apollo. So she was involved in the cults, if you will.

We read, in verse 17, "This girl followed Paul and us," (Luke and Timothy and Silas) "and cried out, saying, 'These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.' " Now there's an element of truth in that, isn't there? They were, indeed, the servants of the Most High God. That title was used by the Jews of Yahweh. Unfortunately, it is also a title used by the Greeks for Zeus. Same wording. So a little bit misleading. On the surface it was weird, but maybe it was okay. It teaches me when I see the demons begin to cry out when God is around, that shows us the subjection of the devil to the Lord. You remember reading through the gospels - everywhere Jesus showed up, the demon-possessed would run out and go, "There He is. He's the One! He's the Lord!" And Jesus would always tell them to knock it off. He didn't want press from the devil,

you know? He didn't want the devil doing His advertising. So He'd always just tell them to knock it off and shut up and sit down; and they would. But you see this reaction - the enemy, he can't but point out, if you will, the work that God is doing. And so this woman comes running out, and she begins to say words that, on the surface, to us - Most High God - sound like maybe that's right; but if you know that it's Greek for Zeus as well, now it doesn't seem so exciting. I would say this - the church doesn't need the world's ways to get the Word out. We rely on the Holy Spirit, right? His work in your life and in mine. One of Satan's ploys is to get you to trust in something else.

We read something interesting in verse 18. It says, "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." I always read the Bible with questions. My question is - why did Paul let it go on so long? I don't know. I know he was hard at finding out God's will when he was traveling. It's been months to get here. I don't know if it was a lack of discernment. I don't know if he just didn't know what to do, God hadn't given him a direction. I just know that we read he was "greatly annoyed," which is the word for pained or bothered in Greek. It was wearing him out. Maybe it hurt him to see this poor woman so tormented. But whatever it was, the Lord finally, by His Spirit, gives him leave to act, and he speaks directly to this demon that was obviously at work in this lady's life. He commands that this demon depart from her in the name of Jesus, and it did that very hour. Here's what didn't happen - if you ever saw the movie "The Exorcist," that didn't happen. Or any of those other striving-with-the-devil-and-God-and-who's-gonna-win? It doesn't look like that at all in the Bible. The Lord said, "Go," and the devil goes. "Greater is he that is in you" (1 John 4:4). This isn't a battle of equals. Right? So this demon goes out without painful prayer, hours of fasting, tremendous struggle. One sentence, and this woman is delivered from the power of the enemy and set free. The name of Jesus. Awesome. Right? What an awesome name! But you can't use His name if you don't belong to Him. You don't believe me, go read Acts 19 where some guys try to practice and copy this, and they get beat to death with demons. Not a good way to go. Jesus said (one of the last things in Matthew 28), "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. You go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them. I have all of the power. You go." So, if you're in Him, then power is yours. He'll be with you in ministry. But don't just try to formulate Him without having a relationship with Him. So, Satan is forever trying to deceive men. Paul wrote to Timothy in his last letter to him (2 Timothy 2:24) that as a servant of God,

Timothy "should not quarrel but he should be gentle and teach people and be patient, and in humility correcting those who are in opposition. Perhaps God would give them repentance," he said to Timothy, "so they might know the truth, that they might come to their senses, that they might escape the snare of the devil, in which they had been taken by their own will." That's how Paul described the warfare. And so, as a pastor, I think that when we go out to pray or to minister, I'm sure that there are people that are bound by the enemy; and my prayer has always been, in ministry, to pray specifically that God might open eyes and bind the enemy from the work that he loves to do. Even that sometimes people give him the open door, as Paul said to Timothy to do. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about, "If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled from those who are perishing, in whose mind the god of this world has blinded them so they might not believe, lest seeing the light, they would believe and come out" (2 Corinthians 4:3). So there is a warfare for the souls of men, and I think it is wise - if you're sharing with people - you pray that the enemy would just be bound. It is a spiritual warfare. And God that you serve is far greater than the enemy, but you've got to go to the Lord and ask Him to deal with Satan who blinds eyes and perverts judgments and confuses thoughts and twists what is being said. It's why normal people are nice to you until you mention Jesus, and then they go crazy. Pastor Greg sent me a note today about those advertisements that they had to take down because someone was "triggered" in a mall by seeing him holding a Bible. "Triggered." I don't know. That's a new word. In my day, Trigger was a horse (Laughing) you rode around. But anyway, it's a different deal. People are very sensible, astute, wisdom, wise until you say Jesus, and they go nuts. It's because there's a spiritual warfare that goes on. So pray that the Lord open the eyes of the blind. There's that Scripture in Mark 3:27 that says, "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man." So I think there's something to be said for prayer entering into the warfare for souls. And Paul did the same thing; in Jesus' name, he speaks to this demon and sees this woman delivered, and he's gone in a moment, and her life is freed. Well, you would think that would be good news for all.

Except you get to verse 19, and it says, "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. And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, 'These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe.' " So, like many businesses today that operate on the lust and the vice and the misery of others, there was no rejoicing in these businessmen over the deliverance of a woman in

travail, no rejoicing in her freedom. They were just weeping over their loss of income. And I always pray when we get to places that have a lot of that stuff; I like the idea of praying that the Lord would just close more businesses that profit from the sins of men. That'd be awesome. Right? God, just shut them down. Well, these are awful. And I'm not a political guy. I'll stay away from it because I think there's power in the gospel. But there're a lot of wicked practices today protected under the First Amendment that might be legal, but they're sin in God's eyes. So, here, the Roman state would protect the rights of these men to enslave a woman. They would not protect her right to be free from being mistreated. Things haven't changed very much in all of our centuries. As a result of God's work through Paul and the guys - God's deliverance of this woman - they are arrested. They are charged with subversion, teaching things that the Romans wouldn't allow. Roman law, by the way, forbid religion other than the state-authorized one. So you couldn't just come in and teach whatever you wanted. But that's not the reason for this lawsuit, is it? This is all about loss of income, and they hide from the court their real interest, and they wrap it up in a complaint about political issues between Romans and Jews. "They are anti-Roman troublemakers, and they're making great trouble for us." Now, again, going back to what the Bible tells us, Timothy probably looked like a *Gentile*; his dad was *Greek*. Remember, he had to be circumcised. Luke was a *Gentile*. So, between those two, I think that's probably why they weren't grabbed. But Paul and Silas were absolutely arrested, and they were taken. And cries of national pride and foul worked, and the crowd was worked-up, if you will, and they accused these men of subverting their Roman way of life.

And then we read, in verse 22, "Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods." No hearing. Just outlaw justice. Stripped naked. Beaten publicly. By the way, the first of at least three horrible, brutal beatings Paul has to endure for the sake of Jesus in these localities. Local rules, local town, horrible treatment. Now here's the catch (and we will hit it next week) - Paul's a Roman citizen, so is Silas. You beat a Roman citizen, and they find out about it, you die. Paul keeps that "ace of clubs" in his pocket. I think about the third beating, I'd go, "Hey, let me show you my Roman driver license." (Laughing) "Quit hittin' me, you idiot." Paul takes a beating, says nothing; puts it in his pocket and goes to jail in cuffs, in the hole. Bloody and beaten. And tuning up to do worship songs at night. He will, however, when he gets out, play the card before he leaves town so that he can buy the church some peace. It's a young church. There're only a few believers. He's going to be leaving. The crowd seems to have the upper hand. So he says, "Hey, by the

way, you beat Romans." "Oh, man, please leave." "I'm gonna leave, but if I hear any trouble for these guys, I'm comin' back." I think Paul ended up in a place of authority, but in order to do so, he had to take one on the head, and he did. So, the crowd gets stirred up, the commanders demand that they're beaten.

Verse 23 just says, "And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks." Beaten severely, maximum security, open wounds, shackles in place. I mean, at this point, again you're traveling with Paul; it takes you months to get here to decide, "This is where the Lord wants us." Some woman at the river gets saved, and her family seems to be doing okay. And now the second salvation - a poor girl that has been possessed and used by many is delivered. And now you're beaten and in jail. And don't you think Silas looked at Paul and went, "Troas. Really? Did they say Phi-lip-pi? Look at me in the eye, Paul. Tell me clearly, again, what he"..... because I think that this looks like maybe they took a wrong turn. Right? They don't have much to show for what they've done. "Are we in the will of God? Are we out of the will of God? Maybe we've made a mistake. Did He really lead us here for a couple of people? The fruit is extremely scarce. I think we're trying to be obedient. What in the world is going on?" And there's a question in there. And the question is - how do you handle seeming reversals in the Lord, where you believe God is leading you somewhere, and you go, and it just blows up in your face. "Well, I thought the Lord wanted me here." And it's obvious to everyone but you at this point, you probably shouldn't have come. But in your heart, you just know, "Gosh, this is where God wanted me. How could things have gone so wrong and fallen apart so poorly? And how come I'm in worse straits than I've ever been? And all I'm trying to do is walk with the Lord." And the answer is - we're going to cover that next week because, look, we have no time at all tonight.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
August 12, 2018