

Where do we find Freedom?

Acts 16:16-40 October 11, 2020 Thanksgiving Sunday

Acts Series: Taking the Message of Jesus' Kingdom Everywhere

Acts 16¹⁶ Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.¹⁷ She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

¹⁹ When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

²² The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods.²³ After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.²⁴ When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.²⁶

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.²⁷ The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.²⁸ But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized.³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

³⁵ When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men."³⁶ The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace."

³⁷ But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

³⁸ The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed.³⁹ They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city.⁴⁰ After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.¹

¹ The New International Version. (2011): Zondervan.

1. Captivity

Acts 16:16-24

*“Once when we were going to the place of prayer,
we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future.
She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. Verse 16*

A. A Girl

Acts 16:16-18

Back to the place of prayer
She recognizes those who are also ‘slaves’

Slave Girl παιδίσκη (*paidiskē*) Used 14 times in the NT. The girl who confronts Peter at the one of his denials (all four gospels) In Acts twice: The girl Rhoda in Acts 12:13, and here. And four times in Galatians 4 describing Hagar from Genesis 16.

Divination πύθων (*pythōn*) Used only here in the NT. In Greek mythology a python-like serpent or dragon guarded the oracle of Delphi. It was slain by Apollo. The name was transferred to Apollo; later applied to diviners or soothsayers, regarded as inspired by Apollo. The demon possessed woman was associated with the cult of Apollo and had “a spirit of divination.” This ‘spirit’ was considered to be one of the most powerful.

Servants/Slaves δοῦλος (*doulos*) Used 130 times in the NT. It is common in Luke(28x) and used sparingly in Acts(5x). A bond-servant or slave. A person whose will is subject to another.

Are Paul and Silas in bondage or are they free?
She may be mocking that slaves proclaim deliverance

Saved/salvation/deliverance σωτηρία (*sōtēria*) Salvation/deliverance. Used 46 times in the NT. In Luke (4x) and Acts (6x). It is not used as often as we might have presumed. Her/its personal interest or desire for salvation/deliverance in Jesus may quite low. Her/its purpose may to be disruptive to Paul and Silas.

What does this episode suggest to us about ‘spiritual warfare’?

- It seems ordinary
- That ‘s’pirit had some insight (predictive ability)
- Paul did not do anything until she became a ‘pest’
- It seems uncomplicated
- The girl was in bondage to others
- The girl while ‘released’ is not ‘saved’
- Paul does not speak or teach on this topic
- The passage treats this as a minor detail of the narrative

Two things disappear the ‘s’pirit and the revenue
Money seems to be a barrier to embracing Jesus Christ

B. Paul and Silas

Acts 16:19-24

Jewish Identity – Disorderly – Anti-Roman
The claims were a diversion to the truth
Justice and Peace are not the same in Roman times (now?)
Flogging – use of rods or switches (sticks)
Roman Citizenship - untold

2. Freedom for the Captor

Acts 16:25-34

He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Verse 30

A. Joy and Freedom

Acts 16:25-28

Joy is overflowing Verse 25
What would you or I do in that jail?

Where does joy come from?

Prison restraints gone Verse 26

Jailer's duty Verse 27

A 'non'-captive audience Verse 28

Who is delivered from bondage in this passage?

B. A Freedom that brings Joy

Acts 16:29-34

What must I do to be saved? Verse 30

What brings this kind of freedom?

Believe in the Lord Jesus Verse 31

Jailer shows God's work taking root. Verses 33, 34
Kindness, baptism, gentleness, hospitality, and joy

3. A New Bind

Acts 16:35-40

After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left. Verse 40

A. A subtle change

Acts 16:35, 36

Released to go in peace may be an order more than blessing
A little late for that

B. Paul's protest

Acts 16:37

What has changed?
Miraculous release, Administrative release

C. Freedom to proceed

Acts 16:38-40

Officials want them out of town
Paul and Silas don't leave but meet and encourage the church

Freedom

Freedom does not come from a law or the release from a prison cell. Freedom does not come even from deliverance from evil forces unless it is followed by belief in Jesus Christ as Lord. Freedom comes from re-engaging with our creator through Jesus.

John 8³¹ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

³³ They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

³⁴ Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ I know that you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word. ³⁸ I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.”

John 1¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. ²

Freedom comes through faith in Jesus.

Freedom comes as we faithfully follow Jesus as Lord

Freedom comes as we trust Him in every situation

Freedom comes as we Jesus’ will and agenda first

Freedom in Christ is a different Freedom than we may think

Freedom is accompanied by Joy in situations that are complex

Joy in Pain, Jail, and terrible injustice.

Joy may affect our emotional state. Joy is not rooted in emotion. Joy is a perspective, understanding and relationship with God. Joy is associated with Grace and comes from being in Jesus Christ. Romans 5:3, 4 rejoicing moves suffering to hope. Joy is part of God’s ongoing work in us (Acts 16:34; Romans 15:13; Galatians 5:22)