

A Jailer: Getting Free from Internal Prisons
Acts 16:6-40 (NKJV)
April 27, 2022

Introduction: *Like many ethnocentric Roman communities, Philippi had little tolerance for the “odd” faiths and practices. The ruins of an arch one mile west of town still stand as reminder of that intolerance. Outside lay cemeteries, meeting sites of foreign religions and all else that Roman classified as “impure.” The city of Philippi was not a friendly place to start a church. But Paul did just that.*

Questions and Answers:

1. How did the Christian church in Philippi begin?
2. What does this text tell you about Lydia’s character that would make her a capable founding member?
3. Since the slave girl was telling the truth about God, why do you think Paul told the evil spirit to leave her (vv.16-19)?
4. What evil influences complicate your life?
5. Christ’s power is greater than any power of evil-which is why Paul could command the evil spirit to leave the girl in the name of Jesus Christ. As you reflect on the power of Jesus, what practical steps can you take in your struggle against the evil that touches your own life?
6. Look again at vv. 19-21. What problems for the new church in Philippi were the charges against Paul and Silas likely to create?
7. The jailer was himself a prisoner, a prisoner to his job and a prisoner to his inner fears. What all did God do to free him from each of these prisons?
8. Paul told the jailer “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household” (v. 31). What freedoms does this new relationship with Jesus provide?
9. From what you can see of the Jailer’s actions, why do you think that he would be a valuable addition to the new Christian church in Philippi?
10. How did Paul’s method of leaving Philippi act as further protection for the church he had founded (vv.37-40)?

Reflect and Pray:

- When you think of the future of your church, what worries come to mind?
- What can you do to help protect your church from the kind of harm that you envision?
- If Jesus is your Lord, what structure does this bring to your life?
- Can you think of different internal prisons people live in today? Do you have any?
- Pray for anyone that comes to mind when you think of internal prisons.
- Pray for your church.

Acts 16 (NKJV) Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, *the* son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* Greek. ² He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. ³ Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek. ⁴ And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. ⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

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 ^[a]Asia. ⁷ After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the ^[b]Spirit did not permit them. ⁸ So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 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.

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 ^[c]foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. 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*. 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. 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.

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. 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 ^[d]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. 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.

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

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 ^[e]officers, saying, "Let those men go."

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."

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