



A WEALTHY WOMAN, A SLAVE GIRL, & A JAILER WALK INTO THE FAITH - ACTS 16:11-40

STARTING THE DISCUSSION...

Do you believe that every person should be treated with dignity, respect, and equality, regardless of their race, gender, or status? Most people in the western world hold this value as self-evident, yet in many places in the world this is not so. While Canada is by no means a Christian nation, the western world in general has a belief system that is borrowed from Christianity. And the values that we hold on people's freedom and equality come from a Christian worldview. The gospel is open to everyone equally. No one is excluded because of who they are or their station in life. This is seen clearly in how the church has spread throughout history even back to the early days of the church. As Paul sets sail onto the continent of Europe, landing in Philippi, we see that the first converts to Christianity are a woman, a slave girl and a jailer. A beautiful cross section of how the gospel transforms people from all walks of life into one family through faith in Jesus Christ.

KEY TEXT: ACTS 16:11-40

¹¹ So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We



remained in this city some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation."

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² And 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 wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.



³⁴ 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. ³⁵ But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." ³⁶ 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." ³⁷ 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." ³⁸ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. ³⁹ So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

Additional Texts: *Galatians 3:28, 1 Peter 4:12-13, 2 Corinthians 4:5, Acts 13:48*

UNDERSTANDING THE WORD

1. What is the significance of Lydia's conversion in Luke's narrative? How should verse 14 inform how we think about our own conversion narrative?
2. Why does Paul insist on his rights as a Roman citizen in this passage? Why does he wait until the next day to let them know? What was his goal in being publicly let go?

APPLYING THE WORD

3. What comfort does it bring you that Jesus saved such a cross-section of people in Philippi and made them a church family? What about it challenges your assumptions, posture and practices?
4. With such societal, governmental, medical, and environmental unrest in our moment, how does Paul and Silas's behaviour in prison teach you the way Christianity fortifies you to face the worst life can send you?



PRAYING & ACTING

1. Share with your group the name(s) of one or two people that you would like the opportunity to share the gospel with in your life. Pray that God would give you opportunities to share and hold one another accountable to be reaching out.
2. How can your Life Group reach out to your community this week? Who can you invite to join your group?

