



Sermon Series Notes

"The Power of Prayer & Praise" (Acts 16)

Danny Hodges - NT3639

I. THE TEXT

v.3 Anyone who would be willing to be circumcised at the age Timothy must have been is committed!!

Phil.2: 19-22 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

See Gal.2:3-5; Timothy was circumcised in order to be “all things to all men” (See I Cor.9:19-23). Titus was not circumcised so that “the truth of the gospel might be preserved.”

vv.6-10 The Holy Spirit often guides as much by the *closing* of doors as He does by the *opening* of doors.

Rev.3:7b...What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

Note: In verse 10 there is a change in the pronoun from “they” to “we.” At this point Luke the physician was added to their team, perhaps to personally care for Paul’s illness (refer to Gal.4:13). Luke would also be used by God to write more of the New Testament than anyone else.

vv.11-12 From Samothrace it was an eight mile walk to the port city of Philippi. Philippi was named after Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great.

v.13 According to Jewish tradition, there had to be ten male heads of households before a synagogue could be built. So there was no synagogue in Philippi. If there were Jews in an area without a synagogue, the custom was to find an open area near a river or by the sea. There they would pray, recite the Shema (Deut.6:4), and read from the Law and the Prophets. So there was not one man here at this river on the Sabbath, which tells us how spiritually desolate this area was. No wonder God gave Paul a vision of a man of Macedonia calling for help. They really needed it!

vv.14-15 The dyes used for making this purple cloth were expensive and highly regarded.

A church was later birthed in Thyatira (Rev.2:18-29). It is likely that this business woman named Lydia was the first to take the gospel message to Thyatira.

vv.16-18 She was a clairvoyant owned by spiritual pimps who sold her metaphysical powers. What she shouted day after day was true, but it appears it was said in a mocking kind of way.

vv.19-24 So far, a business woman named Lydia and her family have been saved, a lady fortune teller has been delivered from demonic possession. But where is the “man” of Macedonia?

Paul & Silas have now been flogged and placed in the inner cell of the local jail and their feet fastened to the stocks. The officials who beat Paul and Silas were called “lectors” in Latin. This is where we get the expression “taking your licks.” In Jewish legal tradition, there was a maximum number of blows that could be delivered when beating a person, but the Romans had no such limit. We can be sure Paul and Silas were severely beaten. See II Corinthians 11:23b-25.

II Tim.2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Someone has said that Christians are like tea bags. We’ll never know what our flavor is until we’re in hot water. Paul & Silas’ true flavor comes out in this painful experience.

v.25 It’s easy to praise the Lord when things are going well. The true flavor of our hearts is revealed when things in life go south. See I Thess.5:16-18; Rom.8:18.

vv.26-28 If the prisoners escape, this jailer would be executed, and this is why he intends to take his own life. The prisoners not escaping must have to do with the influence of Paul & Silas’ prayer and worship, and the connection these prisoners must have made to their prayer & worship, the earthquake, & the miracle of everyone’s chains coming loose. They are no doubt in awe, not so much of Paul & Silas, but in the God Paul & Silas worship & serve.

And they are not the only ones in awe. Look what happens next.

vv.29-30 I think perhaps Paul looked at Silas, Silas looked at Paul, and they both at the same time thought, “The MAN from Macedonia!”

This is certainly a man who needs help. He is facing execution if the prisoners get away. But he was facing worse than that if he had taken his own life before Paul and Silas had a chance to share with him the hope of the resurrection of the dead!

vv.31-34 What a tremendous conversion! There is no indication that this man was looking for the Lord, but the Lord was looking for him. He went from a steady paying position as a jailer to “the end of his rope” in an instant. And God was right there to meet him by way of two most unusual prisoners. He went from suicidal fear to abounding joy in just an instant. What power there is in the message of the gospel! See Rom.1:16-17.

vv.35-40 The church at Philippi would become one of Paul’s most beloved congregations! (Phil.1:3-8).

II. LESSONS FROM THE TEXT

- Don't Be Discouraged By Closed Doors
 - Rev.3:7b...What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

- When God closes one door, it means He will open another one according to his will & in His time. I have seen this in ministry time after time. For example, when we were looking for church facilities, I was convinced that the old S&H Green Stamps store at 9th St. & 54th Ave. North was the building God had for Calvary Chapel. God closed the door. Then we signed a lease for a property on 4th St. North near Gandy Blvd. The night we signed the lease with the owner he went home and took his own life. You talk about a closed door! A while later we made an offer on a building in the vicinity of 9th St. North & Gandy Blvd. The owners accepted an offer \$100,000 lower than what we offered. I was perplexed to say the least. Then we ended up leasing property across the street. Because of numerical growth we expanding from the old Winn Dixie space into the Eckerd space, then the hair salon, then the Bridge Club space. We came to a point it seemed better to buy the property than continue leasing, so we met the owners to see if they would be willing to sell, and if so how much would they ask for the property. We settled on \$3.4 million, then they decided not to sell. That property was 7 acres with 65,000 square feet of building. As we continued to grow numerically, people began to say, "We're gonna need Wal-Mart before long." I would just chuckle inside. Then Wal-Mart built the Super Wal-Mart a quarter of a mile down the road, and the old building sat empty. A member of our board at the time was in real estate, so he did some research, contacted the right Wal-Mart representative, and told them what we felt we could offer for the property. They were asking \$4.2 million. We offered \$2.4 million, and stuck with that offer. And here we are, worshipping the Lord in an old Wal-Mart, which some now call Soul Mart. By the way, we never thought that our offer was the reverse of what Wal-Mart was asking, but ain't that cool? The property across the street, 7 acres, 65,000 square feet for \$3.4 million. What God had in mind was 14 acres and 118,000 square feet of building space. And not too long ago God allowed us to acquire another 10 acres adjacent to the property.
- Give thanks in all circumstances
 - I Thess.5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
 - See Daniel 6:10, 25-27; had Daniel not been thrown into the lion's den, the witness for God would never have been as great as it was.
 - If Paul & Silas had not been thrown in jail, the Philippian jailer would not have been saved, and the prisoners in that jail would not have been set free from their chains.
 - Gal.4:13 As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.
- The power available through prayer & praise
 - See Acts 4:23-31
 - See II Chron.20:1-12, 18-27

INVITATION

Perhaps a door has closed for you and you don't understand why. Perhaps several doors have closed and you do not understand why. Will you trust the Lord that He closed a door for your own good and for His glory? Will you trust that He will open a door in His time & according to His will?

Some of us are in a very painful circumstance in life. Would you be willing to give thanks to the Lord in the midst of your circumstance, to praise the Lord despite your circumstance?

It could be that someone listening to this message is at the end of their rope, possibly considering taking their own life. Would you instead consider losing your life for Jesus? Jesus said if you will lose your life for him you will find it.

Finally, some may be bound by chains. Not physical chains, but chains nevertheless. Drug addiction, alcohol, pornography, sexual immorality, homosexuality, greed, unforgiveness. See John 8:34-36; Matt.18:21-35

Some people are enslaved by attempting to achieve right standing with based on human effort. It happened to the people in the church of Galatia. See Gal.5:1-4; 3:2-3.

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor...

Worship & Prayer