



# Sermon Series Notes

## Communion Weekend May 2015 “Setting Captives Free” (Acts 16)

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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.

This moves Paul and his missionary team from the continent of Asia to the continent of Europe; this was the first missionary endeavor to Europe.

The greatest help we can bring anyone is the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ! It is good for us to bring other help along with the gospel, but without the gospel, what real help have you given them?

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 write the majority of the NT, including the book of Acts.

vv.11-13a 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, custom was to find an open area near a river or by the sea. There they would pray, recite the Shema, and read from the Law and the Prophets. So there was not one man there on the Sabbath to worship God. This was a spiritually desolate area. No wonder God gave Paul a vision of a man of Macedonia calling for help. They really needed it!

vv.13b-15 A church was later birthed in Thyatira (Rev.2:18-29), and it is likely that Lydia was the one God used to first share the gospel there.

But where was the **man** of Macedonia that Paul had seen in his vision?

vv.16-17 She was a clairvoyant owned by spiritual pimps who sold her metaphysical powers. Satan’s strategy here seems to be an attempt to somehow derail the message of the gospel by forming an apparent alliance with it. He loves to come alongside the truth with an opportunity to distort the truth.

v.18

vv.19-24 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 rest assured Paul and Silas

were severely beaten. Paul would later write of his ministry: *In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.* (2 Corinthians 11:23)

Someone said that Christians are like tea bags. We'll never know what our flavor is until we're in hot water.

v.25 Imagine what these prisoners must have been thinking? They no doubt marveled that Paul and Silas could actually be singing in light of the circumstances they found themselves in. And what kinds of prayers do you think Paul & Silas were praying. I have little doubt were prayers that included thanksgiving. See I Thessalonians 5:16-18 (note 4:10, the Thessalonian church was in Macedonia).

vv.26-30 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 met death before Paul and Silas had a chance to share with him the hope of the resurrection of the dead!

Note v.28, How did Paul keep the other prisoners from escaping. Did they all get saved?

vv.31-34 What a tremendous conversion! Here was a man who was not 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 – Paul and Silas.

This man went from suicidal fear to abounding joy in just a few minutes. And it would have never happened had Paul & Silas not made a choice to pray & praise the Lord despite their circumstances.

## LESSONS FROM THE TEXT

- Never underestimate the power of prayer & praise!
  - II Chron.20: 22 As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.
  - They weren't praying & singing just when times were good, prayer & singing praise to God was a regular part of their lives; Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, sung a hymn (Matt.26:30).
  - Daniel 6: 10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.
- Don't be discouraged by closed doors
- The greatest help we can bring to anyone is the gospel
  - Rom.1: 16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

- Nothing can keep us from communion with the Lord
  - Romans 8:35-39 What shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...I am convinced that neither height nor depth, not anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- If we are willing to “take our licks” for Christ, we may end up being used to set captives free.
  - I endure everything for the sake of the elect. God’s strategy to get the apostle Paul before kings and great leaders was through suffering.
  - Hebrews 11:4 says that Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. I believe Stephen’s death was used by God to bring great conviction to Saul of Tarsus.
- God delights in setting captives free
  - 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...

II Tim.2:26 talks about someone coming to their senses and escaping from the trap of the devil, who has “taken them captive to do his will.”

Eph.4:27 encourages us this way: “Don’t give the devil a foothold.”

A foothold over time becomes a stronghold, and we are then held captive.

What are some things that people need to be set free from?

1. An attitude (anger, bitterness, rage, unforgiveness, pride)
  - King Saul & David
  - Kevin Spencer & the galahs
  - See Matt.18:21-35
2. A habit
  - II Peter 2:19...people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.
  - Drugs, alcohol
3. Lust (pornography, etc.)
  - Overcome homosexual sin the same way overcome heterosexual sin: Resist, say no.
4. Romantic deception
  - Tammy, “Learning to Love by Faith,” Facebook
5. Greed
  - Kept the rich young ruler from inheriting eternal life
6. Guilt
  - What Jesus did on the cross enables us to have our conscience cleansed (Heb.10:22).

7. Fear

- Prov.29:25 Fear of man will prove to be a snare...

8. Fear of death

- Heb.2:14-15...so that by his death he might...free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.