

# Acts 16

by Bill Gallatin

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*The sermon on Acts 16 emphasizes God's sovereignty in ministry, the importance of mentorship, and the need for cultural sensitivity in evangelism.*

**Duration:** 1:18:24

**Scripture:** Isaiah 55:8-9, Acts 16:6-34, Romans 8:18, Colossians 3:23

**Topics:** "Expositional"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of sharing the word of God with others. He encourages the audience to see themselves as missionaries and to be open to opportunities to share their faith, even in unexpected places like gas stations or grocery stores. The speaker also highlights the story of Paul and Silas in prison, where their worship and praise to God led to the conversion of the Philippian jailer. He emphasizes the power of our words and actions in influencing others and encourages the audience to be bold in sharing their faith, as God may have already prepared someone to receive the message.

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## Transcript

Before we begin Acts chapter 16 this evening, we're going to see that Paul is all of a sudden hooked up with young Timothy. He's referred to as the son of his faith. But there's a text in Isaiah chapter 55, verses 8 and 9, where the Lord says, my ways are not your ways, and neither are my thoughts as your thoughts.

So they're just completely different. And he goes on to say, as high as the heavens are above the earth, are my thoughts above your thoughts, and my ways above your ways. As we look at chapter 16 in the scriptures, we're going to see things that God designs that no man would design for the redemption of people.

And yet at the same time, the keeping power of the Holy Spirit, and what the grace of God does in a man through suffering. Paul said, you know, I consider the sufferings of this life not worthy to be compared with the glory that I'm going to receive in the kingdom of God with Jesus Christ. They're not even worth talking about.

They're really not worth comparing this short time down here, these sufferings, when I compare it with the glory that I will receive with the Lord when it's all over. And certainly, Paul began to experience many sufferings because the more he dedicated his life to Christ, the more Satan sought to hinder his life. As I

look back at my own life, and I look at some of the people that I used to know in Christ, and don't see anymore in Christ, it's interesting how the less they walked with the Lord, the less their persecution.

The less the trials. And as they began to neutralize for their own preservation to be accepted by the world again, it's interesting how they just slowly disappeared from an active part in the body of Christ. And yet I see others who have continued to walk with Jesus Christ, and not be ashamed of the gospel, not have the fear of man, not love the world, and forsake the Lord for the world, as Demas did.

Paul, you remember, said, you know, Demas have forsaken me for this present world, his love for the world. And I've seen the people that walk with Christ grow stronger, develop more into the image of Jesus Christ. Not because of their own personal strength, but because of what is imparted to them by the faithfulness of God through the Holy Spirit.

Now, you remember, Paul had his argument with Barnabas and with Mark, and so he takes Silas and he heads for Turkey. The Lord has divided them to send these two powerful groups into opposite directions to spread the gospel. Without that division, they would have stayed together.

So here, immediately we see God allowing some sort of a faction, temporarily, because we learned last time that later on in Paul's life, he and Mark were brought back together, and all the differences were patched up, you know, by the Lord. In fact, he said that, bring Mark with you, and he was in jail, and he said, for he is valuable, he's necessary for me. So we see that through that division, God used that to cause Mark to grow and mature, and maybe to mellow Paul, and to give him a little more tolerance for the failures of someone younger in the faith.

You see, they both have changed. And so now they're in a place called Derbe, which is today Turkey. All these towns and these areas that we'll be looking at are the major portion of Turkey as we know it today.

But then came he to Derbe and Lystra, and behold, a certain disciple was there named Timotheus. And again, here's this young man. Paul makes mention of Timothy no less than six times in his epistles.

He referred to him as his son in the faith. He was the father of his faith. He was a very godly young man, had a godly grandmother, Lois.

His mother was a Jewish, and his father was a Greek. Again, Timothy many times wrote for Paul, wrote letters for Paul, or delivered letters for Paul when he was incarcerated. And so here God has brought them together to meet since he has been separated from young Mark.

You know, I like being around young believers. That reminds me of David. You look at the life of Saul, and in the beginning Saul had tremendous faith, and he had courage, and he stood head and shoulders above the crowd.

And here God gave him a new heart, poured out the Holy Spirit upon him. He prophesied. And then later on in years, he was filled with envy and pride and deteriorating.

And here he was the king, and he was afraid to go up against Goliath. And who goes up against Goliath but this young stripling David? Some young teenager is the one who goes out by, you know, in faith. And it's great to see a young new believer.

Well, it's great to see an old believer that has the faith of David that continues on. It's difficult to watch someone just get old and stodgy and settle down and lose their excitement for Jesus Christ. And so Paul, like many people, like to be around young believers, have a good mix because of the excitement and the zeal.

And he's not afraid to take a step of faith, as David wasn't afraid of Goliath. Everybody's standing around forming a church committee trying to figure out what to do with the enemy, how to combat this Goliath and the Philistines. And David goes running out with a sling and grabs five stones.

And just with faith and excitement. And so young Timothy meets with Paul, the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess. And so that makes Timothy a Jewish boy, because it's the lineage or the race is determined by the mother or the woman in the family.

And he believed, she believed, but his father was a Greek, which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters, for they knew all that his father was a Greek. So they're going into new territory.

Paul hadn't been there for some five years. And it's interesting, they just had the meeting in Jerusalem concerning the Mosaic law abstaining. Remember they came to a decision of Judaizers were following Paul, forcing the Gentile converts to Christ to be circumcised.

Paul said that's nothing but works. That's not necessary for salvation. And there was such a furor over it.

You remember they had the council and they went and they met in Jerusalem. And they decided that these young converts, Gentiles, did not need to submit to circumcision for righteousness or salvation. But rather than stumble anybody, they said we will forstay or actually abstain from eating any meat with blood, anything strangled, we'll keep the Sabbath and still try to, you know, keep peace with the Jewish believers that have not been set free in the spirit yet to realize that none of those things are important.

But you see it's not necessary for a Jewish or for a Gentile to be circumcised. And so what does Paul do? Why does he have him circumcised anyhow? Well, first of all, he probably would have created a riot. The Jews were very touchy about this.

And so remember in Corinthians, Paul taught that he became all things to all people, that he might win all people to Christ. Remember Paul said I have the liberty to do so many things. But even if it came to eating of meat, and I was around somebody as he taught in Romans, who was weak in the faith, and he was a vegetarian, because he was weak in the faith, he felt he couldn't eat meat.

It wasn't holy or pure. Even though he had the liberty to eat that meat, rather than stumble the weak brother in his presence, he would abstain from having the cheeseburger or the pizza with pepperoni. He would abstain.

Now you better believe that when that weak brother wasn't around, he knew he could eat that cheeseburger and that pepperoni. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 9, and it's really what it is. It's the law of the liberty of Christ.

I can exercise my freedom, and just as Paul said, he knew that the meat bought in the meat market that was offered to idols was nothing. But if it would stumble a brother who was weak in the faith, he refused to

even partake of it. He would do nothing that would cast a stumbling block in a new believer's path.

He would begin to, he would adopt to that culture or that situation. If he was invited to a home, he would just limit himself in his own freedom because of the limitation of the people at home, that he might win them to Christ. But I think it's in 1 Corinthians 9. I believe it's in 1 Corinthians 9. Let's see, 9.19. Paul says, for though I be free from all men.

In other words, he knows he's free in Christ. He doesn't have to adopt man's holy rituals or laws, even the Jewish rituals or laws anymore, because Christ has made him free. Christ fulfilled the law, and he knows that in his heart.

But he may be with believers who are not aware of that yet. So he says, though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself a slave unto all that I might gain them all. In other words, I will submit to their wishes.

Now, not when it comes to sin issues, but into situations like we had been discussing, as Paul taught, hey, I'm not going to strive over this thing. I'm not going to try and force them to exercise their liberty and say, hey, you don't have to be that way, and lay some trip on them. He says, hey, I'll eat what's put before me.

And I won't complain what isn't put before me and say that you have a right to eat it if they still are fearful of it. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew. Isn't that interesting? He is raised a Jew.

He's a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He's a Jew, but he's come to Christ, so he's no longer a member of the Jewish religion or the Jewish system, and he sees himself separate as a Christian where there's neither Jew nor Gentile. But he makes reference to the fact that when he's around Jews now that don't believe in Jesus Christ, are concerned about washing the pots and the pans and all the ablutions and all the different things that they are concerned about under the Mosaic law, he said, I became as a Jew that I might gain the Jews and lead them to Messiah, to them that are under the law as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law.

In other words, Paul knew that every day now was a Sabbath. He'd entered into the finished work of Christ. He entered into that beautiful rest.

Everything's complete, and I can rest every day of the week in the Spirit, learning to walk in the Spirit. There's not one special holy day, but if he was around the Jews and they did nothing on Saturday, he would do nothing on Saturday. He'd respect them.

To those that are under the law, I put myself under the law that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without the law, as without law, being not without law to God. In other words, I wouldn't sin, but under the law to Christ that I might gain them that are without law.

To the weak became I weak. If the family were vegetarians, I'd eat what they put before me. I'd eat soup and a salad that I might gain the weak.

I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some. So here he goes into this new area to preach the gospel to Jews that are steeped in their traditions and their Mosaic law. He's bringing young Timothy.

He knows that if they find out he's not circumcised as a Jew, it could create a riot and destroy everything. No one would come to the Bible study. And if anybody knew how to create riots, it was the Apostle Paul

because of his, you know, position on things.

It seemed like he didn't go into a town where he wasn't creating a riot or thrown into jail. He knew the jails. He had carte blanche, so the jails of all of Asia, practically.

He probably had frequent flyer miles to all the jails he was in so many. So what does he do? Now, you know, we're talking here about the great faith of Paul and the wisdom of Paul. I really think that Timothy had some faith here to submit to the circumcision, you see.

So it shows you the love that Timothy had, how he submitted to that, and how he, to win anybody, would submit himself to that painful thing as an adult so as not to offend, to do anything to win people to Christ, particularly people of his own religion and his own belief system. And so he, through the liberty of the law of Christ, submitted to it. And it stopped a riot and made them acceptable because of the Jews which were in those quarters, for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. Now, the very thing that they met at Jerusalem about, that you don't have to be circumcised for righteousness, they were going around and finding the people they'd led to the Lord or the home Bible studies five years previously and then selling it. This is what we've decided.

This is what the elders in Jerusalem decreed. It's not a big issue. These Judaizers that are following us around now and trying to make you worship on the Sabbath and keep holy days and submit to circumcision and have all the different dietary laws.

It's the thing of the past. It's been set aside. And this is what's been decreed.

But at the same time, they're trying to be sensitive to the non-believing Jews that are in the area that they might win them to Christ. So again, walking in wisdom. I think sometimes as young Christians, we go barging into places and we offend.

And we sometimes are persecuted. We break the civil laws in the so-called name of Christ. And then when we're arrested or create problems, we say, well, I'm being persecuted for Christ.

I'm being persecuted for righteousness sake. And I need to mature and be more sensitive of the situation that I'm in. Sensitive to the Spirit, what He would have me to do.

Because it's a continual learning process. And even Paul had to learn it. This man who was steeped in Jewish tradition but had such a love for Christ, such an ache for the lost, particularly of his own people.

And yet because of his strong will and his determination to save souls, even God had to use drastic measures to teach Paul to be sensitive to the Spirit. And know that there are certain places he wants us to go in his timing, his season. He will grant success in his timing, in his season.

And we say, no, we're going this way. God says, no, I don't want you to go that way. Well, they need to be safe.

There's unsafe people there. God says, I know that, but it's not time yet. I want you over here.

Paul had to learn that. Just as we all have to learn that. So they went through the cities.

They delivered the decrees for to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. James, and they met with Peter and all the elders. And so were the churches established in the faith.

A lot of churches start and they never get established. It's wonderful to know that God, once he begins that good work in an individual and even in a church, wants to complete that good work until the day of Jesus Christ and establish the church. And then use the church to start other churches and cause it to grow and to glorify him and to have the people in that church grow and mature and develop and one day go out and begin to serve Christ themselves.

And so through the teaching of the word, the exhortation, the churches are established in the faith. A true understanding and balance and knowledge of Jesus Christ and who he is, how he operates, the person of the Holy Spirit, how he operates, and God the Father. And again, it comes through teaching of the word.

And increased in number daily. Churches were beginning to sprout up. More homes were having Bible studies.

More people's lives were changing and their neighbors saw the benefit in what Jesus Christ had done to a family. And the neighbors were requesting. It's interesting that not so much that they had to go knock on the neighbor's door and try and convert the neighbor.

The neighbor was seeing the change in the Christian and wanted to be part of it. I wonder sometimes if our neighbors really see that we're living for Christ. Do they see Christ in our children? Do we really affect our neighborhoods and our worship of Christ in our lifestyle to such a degree that they know they are Christians? Do they come over and inquire what is it about your family? What is it about your children? Just with what little we've seen you going in and out of your home and your routine.

And what is it? We've seen you in the grocery store. How you treat your children. How you speak to your wife.

And there's something about that. There's a grace about you. There's a beauty about you.

What is it? What religion are you? What denomination are you? And then you say, well, it's Jesus Christ. Some people can live in a neighborhood and for years and not even even have contact with their neighbors. And we say, well, Lord, I want to be used in the mission field.

What better mission field is it than your street? When they all get saved, then go to Asia. Go to New Zealand. Go to South America and Africa.

When everybody at work where you work gets saved, then there's another mission field. Do you realize that every one of us has a mission field now? It's amazing the people get discouraged. They say, I tried to join the mission field and didn't have enough money to go.

I couldn't get the funds to go. God says, I put you in a mission field and I'm paying you to be on the assembly line. There's heathen all around you.

Your foreman is a heathen. The guy next to you in the office is a heathen. And I'll pay you to be there.

Give you a wage. You don't have to save money to get there. You just show up and hit the time clock and I'll pay you.

Share your faith. If anybody needs to be evangelized, it's the United States of America. We're drifting further and further and further away from Jesus Christ.

And so when people are established in the faith and you fall in love with Jesus Christ, how can you be silent? How can you not in some way express the gratitude and the love and the joy that Jesus Christ brings into the life? Now look what Paul had to learn. And again, this goes right back to Isaiah 55, where the Lord says, my ways are not your ways and neither are my thoughts your thoughts. Now notice this zeal and desire.

Paul says, you know, I'll go anywhere. Now here's the sovereign wisdom of God. He plans the church.

He plans redemption. He's the one who gives the success of the Bible study in this neighborhood and not that neighborhood. Who starts the church may be here and not there in his timing.

Notice verse six now. Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia, now that's the southern portion of Turkey and the region of Galatia, they're moving up toward the northwest toward the Black Sea in their missionary journey. And they're on their way to Asia.

They want to go to the east. Paul, you know, is thinking of all the masses of humanity on the other side of the Mideast. And notice they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.

Now stop and think that. You say, well why, Lord? He didn't even give a reason at this particular point. And so many times we think we know better.

I don't think this makes any sense. There's lost souls there. There's people that need to know about the Lord.

I'm going anyway. And maybe in our own lives, I've seen it in my own experience sometimes trying to strive with God and push a door open that he has closed, thinking, well there needs to be somebody there. There's a need there.

They need to hear about Jesus Christ. They need my ministry. And I'm going to, if this is the devil hindering me, and I'm not going to stop or give up.

And you try to open a door that God is closing. And it's such a difficult thing because Jesus said that when he closes the door, no man can open it. But when he opens the door, no man can close it.

The devil can't stop the fruit. It's interesting here, and it's very possible, Paul being so strong-willed, that the Lord had to use physical affliction to stop him here. You remember in Galatians chapter 4 when he's writing back, he's thinking back at this particular portion of his life.

You remember he said, you know, you were going to pluck out your own eyes for me in my infirmity when I preached the gospel to you. And it could be that God had to afflict him with some, with the physical pain, just to slow him down, give him a good dose of something, and put him flat on his back to get his attention. Paul said, where's the blessedness that you speak of? You treated me as an angel of God when you first heard me.

And when I was preaching the gospel in my physical infirmity, you were ready to pluck out your own eyes and give them to me. Now when Paul writes that in Galatians, they were beginning to turn on him. The false teachers were swaying their minds, and they were beginning to doubt Paul, the very person who led

them to Christ.

Now they were turning on him, and it was hurting Paul. But he's saying, in the infirmity of my flesh, I preach the gospel to you. And it could be that that's the time when the Spirit of God forbid him, because God had him to go in the opposite direction.

God wanted to take the gospel to Europe before Asia. He was going to take the gospel to Europe to form the Christian principles and the civilization that would form our Western civilization. The very civilization that you and I have grown up in, Western civilization, because of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And Paul was forbidden. And so after they were come to Mycenae, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not. So then, well, we're going to go, you know, just change direction a little.

You know, God says, I want you going west, not east. And so they were suffered not to go. And many, many times God will use that, an affliction.

In fact, Paul makes reference of Satan himself, hindering him. God having to use that many times because of self-will, strong will. And yet, as Paul looks back on it, oh, what wisdom.

And he sees the success and the blessing. Now, notice what happened after he was forbidden. Paul wasn't going to be discouraged.

God was going to just, you know, let him sit. It says, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night, and there stood a man of Macedonia, Europe, Yugoslavia. God gave him a vision, not a vision of an oriental man in Asia, where Paul wanted to go and preach and maybe get all tied up.

And now stop and think if he would have been able to go into Asia and then would consider all the obstacles and the hindrance, you know, of the devil trying to stop him. And yet, it was the devil leading him to get him somewhere where he shouldn't be. Not a lot of success, and Paul's not going to be a quitter.

So I'm going to stay there. I'm going to preach and hail no matter what. This is where I'm going for Jesus.

And yet, he was playing right into the hands of the enemy, and the Holy Spirit forbid him to go. And then God rewarded. As he yielded, maybe as he was lying down in a green pasture, and it could have been a bed because of this affliction of buffeting, God ministers to him and gives him a vision.

And a man appeared to him, and he prayed him, saying, come over into Macedonia and help us. God's taking the gospel from the Mideast to Europe, and this is the very first step that has led to our salvation. Everybody sitting here tonight, if you're truly a saved human being, you're being raised in Western civilization, and it all started with this vision that Paul got, and his obedience then to respond.

But first of all, before that, God having to afflict him maybe with some physical pain to redirect his life to cause him to let go of something, and then God rewarded him with the vision. Paul responded, and the gospel goes to Europe. Spreads all over Europe, from Europe to the British Isles, from the British Isles to the United States.

And now the United States sending the gospel all over the world. Now the United States leaving the Lord, and the rest of the world now burdened in sending missionaries to the United States. What an ironic thing.

Now notice in the narration here, we know the author of Acts is Luke, who traveled much with Paul. Luke, the physician. Notice in verse 10, the pronoun changes.

Up to this point, everything was they, they, they. Now after the vision, and Paul responds, notice after he had seen the vision immediately, we. All of a sudden, Luke the author is joined with him, and many scholars because of this feel that the vision, the man saying come over and help us, was Luke.

And he had met Paul. In the vision, it was Luke himself saying come over and help us, because the personal pronoun changes from they, then when Paul goes into Europe, it becomes we. So they joined up together.

After he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia. So they have met. Into Europe they go, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

So in some time frame, Paul and Luke meet and get together, and they're going now. Paul is joined with them from this point on. So therefore, loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracea, and the next day to Neapolis.

So right away, immediately leaving Turkey, shooting across toward, across the sea to Macedonia. And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony, that would be a Roman colony. It was called the Second Rome.

Roman judges, Roman magistrates, the Roman politicians, a Gentile city governed by Rome, because it had been subdued and conquered by Rome, and they established that as a colony of Rome. So here's God, see, now taking and moving toward Europe, taking the gospel to the Roman citizens and to Europeans. He said, I'll save Asians.

I've got that in my schedule. I'm controlling the universe. I'm controlling all the different, you know, ages of time.

I'm going to save Asians, but Paul, I'm going into Europe first. And see, he may be working in your life in the same way. Your desire is to go somewhere, to accomplish something, and you need, you think, it has to be right now.

And you feel like God is hindering, and things aren't opening up for you. And God's saying, I've got everything under control. No one's going to be lost because you don't get there now.

This desire in your heart, despise not the small things, as Zachariah said. Just, you know, trust in me. Yield to me.

Be sensitive to my voice. The time will come. You're going to be where I want you to go, but it's a different direction.

It says, He that hasteth with his feet sinneth. The day that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Unless there's any real clear-cut direction, and an open door, it's always good to wait.

Not to rush off in an impulse because of a personal desire, or there's a need there. Wait on the Lord. As it may be, He's pointing you in a different direction.

And oh, when the door opens, the success, the fruit, the blessing, the joy, and the favor from God that Satan can't hinder. And so in the Philippi they go, which is the chief city of Macedonia colony. And we were in that city abiding certain days, and on the Sabbath, that would be Saturday afternoon, we went out of the city by a riverside where prayer was wont to be made.

And we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither. Now, according to Jewish law, wherever there was Jews, and the Jews were scattered because of the persecution, really many Jews were scattered around the known world then because of the Babylonian destruction and persecution. And then because of commerce, Jews drifted and moved.

Because of Samaria, the northern kingdom being divided, many Jews never returned to Jerusalem and moved up into that area. And so there were pockets of Jews that the gospel was going to be taken to by Paul also. And remember, his desire was for the Jew first, for his own countrymen.

But according to Jewish law, if there were 10 Jewish men, there had to be 10 Jewish men in a town or an area, there could be a synagogue. There would be ritual baths made for all the different baptisms and the washings, according to the Jewish law. If there weren't 10 men and there were still Jews in the area, they would gather by a river so they could do their washing or their baptism in the river.

Now, here in Philippi, it's obvious that there was no synagogue, so there weren't even 10 men. There were godly Jews in the area, but there were women there. And here's God leading Paul to meet these Jewish women.

They were by the riverside on the south. They probably heard about it, and so they sought them out. And here's the wisdom and the beauty and the sovereignty and the providence of God.

And I'm sure Paul realized the very first convert in Europe, a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple. Now, immediately we know that she's an extremely wealthy woman, because only wealthy people could even own anything that was dyed purple. Actually, the dye came from a little seashell of an animal that lived in the sea, and it took so many of them to create the dye that would go into the garments that it was very, very, very expensive.

And only the extreme rich, the kings, and the wealthy people could afford to buy purple garments. And she was in commerce, and she was an extremely wealthy woman that sold purple. So here's the gospel meeting the very first convert, an extremely wealthy woman in Europe.

Now, just stop and think of the potential how when she comes to Christ, how God can use her with her resources. And Paul's saying, we got to go to Asia. And God's saying, Paul, I know, look at Paul, I love your zeal, but my plan is better.

Believe me, Paul. I designed redemption, and I can work it out, Paul. I created the universe, Paul.

I have the wisdom and the power. Trust me. And it's interesting here, as he met this seller of purple in the city, she's from Thyatira.

Now, you know where Thyatira is? Asia. It's the gate to Asia. So he's going to save this woman who is in commerce, who travels, who's extremely wealthy and powerful, and she is the one who's going to begin to take the gospel to Asia.

He doesn't need Paul. And the interesting thing is, he didn't need a man. He's got a wealthy woman who loves God.

And notice here the providence in the election of God. He had it all designed. Remember, Jesus told the apostles, I go before you to prepare a place for you.

It's interesting to really see in life, and I've noticed this, when you're being led by the Spirit, and you just get an impulse sometimes, and the Lord speaks to your heart, and you begin to step, one step at a time, how things just begin to play out and open up, and things begin to happen. You go, wow, Lord, this is fantastic. Well, you see, because you're in the Spirit, being led by God, He's gone before you, and He's prepared everything, and people just respond, and things are successful.

It's wonderful. And so here's Paul. He meets this woman.

Well, God had her already prepared. God's working it out. This is the direction He wants Paul to go.

He wants to start saving people in Europe. He'll use Lydia, this wealthy woman, to take her newfound faith, just like the woman at the well did, back to town. She's going to take her faith back to the gate to Asia.

You think, I've got to go to Africa. God says, no, I've got somebody I'll send there. I got somebody from Africa, visiting America, who's going to get saved and meet so-and-so, and I'll send them back there.

You don't need to go, and it won't cost a lot of money. But Lord, you don't understand. I've got this burden.

Isn't that something we actually think in our minds, Lord, you don't understand? Maybe you're not guilty like that, but Lord, you don't understand. And here Paul meets her, and it says, she worshiped God. She heard us.

Paul shared, whose heart the Lord opened. Man, you don't have to grab someone around the throat and squeeze them and force them to believe. When you're in God's will, it's amazing what happens.

Whose heart the Lord opened. God wants to save people so much. He's so desirous to save that he opens up.

He prepares the heart. He says, you have to respond to the message. I'll send someone with the message, and I'll even make your heart ready.

I love you so much. Remember in Ephesians 2.8, it says we're saved by faith through grace, and that faith is not of yourselves. It's the gift of God.

God even grants the faith to believe. All he asks us to do is share. You never know who's going to respond.

And we don't have to rant and rave and threaten and pressure. All we have to do is share the love of Christ, share what God has done for us. And God says, you never know when someone's going to respond.

And I'm going to open your heart, and they're going to say, I want this. How do I, how do you get to know Jesus? Notice the Lord opened her heart. That she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

God had it all designed. All we need to do is just share, not be ashamed or afraid. Well, I don't know, they might, you know, laugh at me, make fun of me, or I don't know if I should.

If we just share honestly and openly what we know about Jesus Christ, you never know that God has got that person prepared for that very meeting for you at that day, at the gas station, at the gasoline pump, in the line at Wegmans, or Chase Pitkin, or in the parking lot, a chance meeting, and next thing you know, you're talking to one another, find out you live in the same neighborhood, and you don't know. God's got that, there's that woman, that person that God's got prepared. If we'll just share.

Everybody here is a missionary. And sure, there may be someone here that God will just touch your heart and send you to Bolivia, or Australia, or Siberia, or put you in jail, just like Paul. We think that's all something in the past.

That'll never happen to me. I'd never be put in jail unjustly. Why not? Have you prayed to be used of God? She attended to the things which were spoken of, Paul, and when she was baptized, boy, her conversion was real.

Now she had the baptism of her life, and her household, her servants. Look at the type of woman she was, the influence. God is going to save everybody around her.

Paul, if you'll just yield to me and go where I want you to go, you may have spent six months and gotten one Asian convert. The first day, I'm going to save one of the wealthiest women in the city, and her servants who know people, that are connected with people, her children. When you allow me to lead, things happen a lot quicker and far greater results.

She'd be saw to saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there, and she constrained us. You know, again, what an example, true conversion. How hospitable people get.

How the home is open. How quickly, come and fellowship. And it came to pass as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gained by soothsaying.

So Satan immediately is going to work here, and you've got a new age channeler. As I just showed you, there's nothing new under the sun. There's no new age.

Here's a woman that channeled with a demon spirit to read people's minds and read their fortunes and test their biorhythms and tell them what their future is going to be. She had a demon spirit of divination. She was a channeler.

Might have been Shirley MacLaine in an older life. Now, this is clever of Satan. If he can't stop the church from getting going, he'll get involved in the church to try and create confusion.

To try and change the doctrine. To begin to cause people to let their guard down and say, for the sake of unity, all paths lead to God. Let's all work together.

Notice what she was saying. How Satan was trying to use her to truly create problems. The same followed Paul and us and cried saying, these men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

Now see, she was stating truth. But see, there's no unity. She does not have good doctrine.

That's a demon spirit. And you don't forsake doctrine for unity. Ever.

There's no real unity without truth. And so here Satan is trying to get involved in something to eventually create a problem down the road by saying, well, yes, that's the way to God. The gospel.

But there's also the Mormon way. And there's also the Jehovah Witness way. And there's also new age techniques.

If you just meditate, you can find Jesus. Yes, you can preach the gospel. Yes, Billy Graham was a good person too.

But so was Reverend Moon and Joseph Smith. And Paul saw right through it, you see. This did she many days.

But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the Spirit. And notice he didn't say, Spirit, identify yourself. But that's not a necessity.

When the Holy Spirit's ready to just deal instantly with Satan, it's just the name of Christ. And you have that same authority. There's nowhere in the scriptures where someone has to have a demon identify itself and keep naming itself before you can cast it out.

And here's the grace of God. Instead of smiting her or destroying her, you see, what God does in His grace is deliver her and give her the opportunity to consider the power of Christ versus the demons that she was channeling with and concerning with in her seances, in her fortune telling. And believe me, anybody that fools around those things is opening themselves up to demonic oppression and confusion and even possession.

But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the Spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. That quickly, Paul just got tired of it all, got tired of this woman following around and rebuked the Spirit.

And now here's the tragedy. You remember when Jesus cast out the demons out of the demon-possessed man and they went into the swine and the swine went down into the Sea of Galilee and perished some 2,000? The owners of the swine who were breaking God's laws making money by raising swine would rather get rid of Jesus Christ than have the man in his right mind. It was their livelihood.

So what do we do? You get rid of extreme fundamental Christians who are against pornography, homosexuality, alcohol, you see. Get rid of them because we make a lot of money selling these things. We'll call it art and entertainment.

Yes, we'll destroy lives, but what we'll do is we'll just get senators and congressmen in Washington by getting lobbyists to get them to pass a bill and take tax money, raise the taxes and make social programs to help them after we give them cancer of the lungs or destroy their livers or their brains after they're alcoholics. And we'll take care of them, but we're not going to stop manufacturing it. It's our livelihood.

So let's get rid of Jesus, you see. Now, the same thing here. Here, Paul delivers a young girl from a demon, but people are making money through this, and so they want to destroy Paul.

They don't rejoice because the girl's freed of Satan. They're angry because, wait a minute, the gospel is affecting my livelihood, my income here. Let's keep the cults going.

We can print literature. We can make money on them. So we've got to stop Jesus Christ from affecting certain portions of our society.

And so what did they do? They told Jesus, get out of our area. Get, leave. We don't want you here anymore.

You're killing our livelihood by putting people in the right minds. They don't drink our liquor. They don't smoke our cigarettes.

They don't take our bill. They don't read our filth. They're not going to our movies anymore.

We've got to do something. Let's get rid of Jesus, and we'll use the constitution. We'll use separation of church and state.

He's killing our pigs. We can't have these kids growing up without sneaking around reading Hustler magazine and Playboy and watching some of that stuff on TV when mom and dad aren't home. We've got to stimulate that young generation so we can get them hooked and make money.

So when they're old enough, they'll go out and buy the magazines themselves. They'll drink the beer themselves. They think Joe Camel is cool.

We'll take care of them when we destroy their lungs. We'll set aside government money and build hospitals and give research to try and fix their lungs. But get rid of Jesus.

We can't stop manufacturing these things. We make money. And so notice when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the marketplace.

In other words, hey, these guys, we're losing our job. They're leading people to Jesus and they're not buying our trash anymore. I had to close down my palm reading in my crystal ball shop.

We have to take our horoscope out of the newspapers. Nobody's reading them. They brought them to the magistrates saying, these men being Jews, the antisemitism comes out.

These Jews, they're causing all that trouble in the Mideast. We need that Arab oil. It's all the Jews' fault.

You see it in all the press today, all the liberal press, the manipulation, the weakness of Washington, because we need the Arab oil, you know, slowly, little by little, taking the other side, you know, making the Jews expendable. And God help America, because you see, God will bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse Abraham. The Jews are God's apple of his eye.

And here, they're hated here. It's these Jews. They do exceedingly trouble our city because they're sharing Christ.

These Christians, they're standing in front of our abortion clinics praying. We make millions of dollars through this Planned Parenthood. We got to get rid of these Christians.

We make too much money. They trouble our city. They teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

And the multitude rose up together against them, and the magistrates ran off their clothes and commanded to beat them. You know, politicians are quick to make sure, you know, they please their constituents. You know, we better make sure we please these guys because they vote for us.

We'll beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely, who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, made their feet fast in the stocks. They threw them down into an underground dungeon, probably had their, not only their feet, but their necks and their hands chained, lying on the bedrock underground after they'd been beaten.

Now, look at this. And at midnight, Paul and Silas are saying, oh God, why have you allowed this to happen to us? We were just being obedient, you know. This is awful.

We can't trust you, God. You tell us to come here and we get thrown in jail and we're beaten, and that's not fair, God. I'm not going to be a Christian anymore.

It's too difficult and too tough. I quit. I wonder what people hear from us when God in his providence begins to bring salvation through our suffering and the way we handle it.

I wonder, after we pray, God, use me to glorify you. Lord, use me. I want to lead people to Christ.

And he allows it to happen to us because his ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. What people hear us say in our suffering when things aren't going good, what our family members hear, what our neighbors or the people we work with hear us say when in God's perfect will, because his ways are not our ways, he sees and knows the Philippian jailer because of the Philippian jailer's makeup and personality that the only way to convert him is for him to see how magnificent a Christian can go through suffering. That there are Christians, that the grace of God, that God knows that he can help, that will worship him and praise him no matter what.

And that's the only way he could see, reach this Philippian jailer because of his personality. So at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God and the prisoners heard them. When things don't go right for you, what do people hear you say? You see, they're in God's perfect will.

And Paul had a desire to save souls, but you see again, God has designed things because of the makeup of his creatures and the personality of the people we're going to meet or that need to be reached. It's through design many times what God allows you and I to go through that he reaches somebody else by the way we handle it and respond to the situation ourselves. And so often we just see the devil in everything.

Everything that's negative. I don't like this Lord and it's got to be Satan and I'm moving on to somewhere else. And God's designed the trouble that he might pour his grace into me, pour himself into me as Jesus promised, I will not leave you comfortless.

I will come to you. I will send the Holy Spirit to you. I will not leave you comfortless.

In fact, he promises and Paul writes it in Philippians 4, 4-9, that when we get into these situations, God will give you peace that passes all understanding. And he can give the peace. See, I see Paul going through it and because I don't need that peace, I don't need that measure of the Spirit and so I relate to it and say, I couldn't handle that.

If you are sold out to Jesus Christ and you've given your life to Christ and you yield to him and say, Lord, there's no more restrictions in my life. I love you so much Jesus. You will handle it.

Because of his grace. Because you're not going through it. You're just seeing someone else go through it.

You think, and because you don't have the grace, you say, I can't handle it. I couldn't do it. That's it.

I'm putting the brakes on. I'm not giving any more of myself to Christ. This is as far as I go.

He may put me through something like that. If he does, the grace will be there. And Paul said, I don't even consider this suffering worthy to be mentioned compared to the glory that I'll receive when I'm with Jesus Christ.

You see, I want people to be saved on my terms. I want another raise. I want a better car, an easy life.

When I have time and I'm not in the golf course or in my boat, I'll go knock on my neighbor's door, invite him to a church picnic. Maybe they'll get saved. That's what's happened to America.

It may not be your life, but that's what's happened to America. It's going to be interesting to see how many people in this church invite someone to the Harvest Crusade really go after their neighbors. Or have we all turned into Laodicea? We're getting close to the end and I just want to just relax a little bit.

I don't want any pressure before the rapture. I just wonder what's going to happen at the Harvest Crusade. How many people in this church are really going to bring people and invite people? Or even give people the opportunity to say, no, I don't want to go.

No, they prayed and they sang. Why? Because God was imparting grace to them. God was filling them, the overflowing, giving a peace that passes all understanding.

And you know what? The jailer saw it and he blew his mind. And it says the prisoners heard them. What is it about these people? 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 bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword and would have killed himself supposing that the prisoners had been fled. Now, that's a normal reaction because Roman law, you see, if you lose your prisoner, you are put to death.

You remember when Peter was released from prison earlier in the book of Acts. Supernatural, and the angel led him out. Passed right through the doors and they were out in the street.

Herod found out that they had escaped. And remember, he killed all 16 of the soldiers. He blamed it on the soldiers.

Roman law says if you lose your prisoner, you are tortured and you're put to death in their place. So you see, not many Roman soldiers lost their prisoners. And so he, this jailer, you see, knowing that the way he treated these Jews, these believers in this Christ, no man in his right mind after being beaten and tortured, thrown into a dungeon, if an earthquake took place in the dark and the rubble, would stick around and wait.

They would leave. They would flee. And he knew he was a dead man because his prisoners would be gone.

Man knows the heart of man. And so he's ready to run his sword right through his stomach rather than face the torture and the beating of the Roman government. But Paul cried with a loud voice saying, do thyself no harm.

For we were all here. Look at the love and the forgiveness. I'm sure that Philippian jailer wasn't very pleasant to Paul when he was bleeding.

Now, this is, some think of this. It said they were given stripes, 39 stripes less one. Now in Galatians, not only did he receive stripes, but five times from the Jews.

This is from the Gentiles. So at least six times he's had his back lacerated, his face mutilated, thrown into jail. And that Philippian jailer who's a Roman citizen, a Roman guard, couldn't care less.

This is convict number 48 laying over there, that Jew. And to have him step out of the dust in the dark in a perfect love saying, don't take your life. I know you ridiculed me.

You could care less about me. But I love you. And because of the God that I love, I want to tell you about this God who loves you too.

Even the way you treated me. This is all, see, it's a love that's so far beyond human reasoning and capacity. And Paul was the living proof of that love to stay there and then turn to the man and say, I want to share the love of God with you.

Paul could have left and said, you know, let him die the way he treated me. He wouldn't believe anyhow, Lord. I don't want to share with him.

The kind of man he is, he wouldn't even respond to the gospel, Lord. I don't want to share with him. He's an ugly man.

Love is so powerful. Forgiveness is so powerful. You say, God, use me.

You don't have to worry about being thrown into jail or beaten. But what's your big struggle? What's my big struggle? You having trouble forgiving somebody? And you want to glorify Christ. You want God to use you.

And you can't even forgive your own wife, your own son, your own daughter, your mother, your husband. See, forgiveness. Love is so wonderful.

It's so life-changing. Do thyself no harm. We're all here.

Then he called for a light and sprang in and came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas and brought them out and said, sirs, what must I do to be saved? Here's the false reasoning, you know, that I can do something to be saved. This is grace. You see, he's going to meet the gospel.

He's going to meet Jesus Christ. There's nothing you can do to be saved. There's nothing I could do that could earn salvation.

It's a gift of God. Notice Paul didn't say genuflect four times. There's a little dish of water over here.

I want you to dip your fingers in it, do the sign of the cross. And I want you to crawl on your hands and knees and beat yourself with rose thorns and bleed and do penance. And I'll hear your confession and God might accept you.

But you have to say these certain prayers. You see what Satan has put upon humanity, whether it's in the guise of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism or any other ism. What must I do? There's nothing.

God doesn't expect anything. He sent his son Jesus Christ to the cross but took it all upon himself to die for our salvation. And he said it is finished.

All he wants you to do is believe it and accept it. Paul could have had this guy in the palm of his hand. And if you'll give me some money, I'll work it out that your dead relatives might get freed.

And I want you to wear this little image around your neck. Notice what they said. Somebody who wants to know, what is this Jesus? What do I do to be saved? No, he didn't say join a movement.

Yes, you have opportunity now to join the Apostolic Paul movement, the Brotherhood movement of the Apostle Paul. He said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That's it? You mean that's it? That's it.

It's so, so easy. So wonderful. God loves mankind.

He can't make it any easier. Not only that, if you believe, thou shalt be saved and thy house. God will save your whole house, your wife, your children, everybody under your roof.

Paul says, just believe. You don't have to go down the aisle. I don't have to put my head down and slip my hand up in the air.

And recite some prayer. Believe. You can be saved tonight, whoever you are.

I don't know what ritual you've been forced to go through trying to become a Christian. Excuse me. But if you're not really saved tonight and really have not experienced Jesus Christ in a real way, all you have to do is believe that Jesus went to the cross, took your sin, my sin, the sin of the whole human race upon himself, suffered the wrath of God, showing God's hatred for sin, the perfect sacrifice once for all, the one mediator between man and God.

And he died. He rose again the third day. He's entered into heaven.

He's seated at the right hand of the Father as your great high priest ever living to make intercession for you. If you believe that with all of your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, thou shalt be saved. I've found out that people that really don't believe in their heart can't confess with their mouth.

They're too ashamed. Isn't it amazing? Some people aren't ashamed to tell the name of their wife or their husband, but they're ashamed to say the name of their God out loud. And yet they say they believe in him.

Can't figure that out. Why are people ashamed to say the name of their God when they can tell the name of their child to someone? This is my child. This is my oldest son, Johnny.

This is my husband, Sam. This is my wife, Nancy. This is my Savior, Jesus.

I know Him too. He's my Savior. And I'll openly confess it if you don't believe you can't do it.

That's how you know you're saved. I can do it. If you confess with your mouth, thou shalt be saved.

You find out, wow, I'm saved. And they speak unto Him the word of the Lord. And to all that were in His house.

And He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes and was baptized He and all His straightway. And when He had brought them into His house, He set meat before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all His house. God was faithful to save the whole house.

And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeant saying, let these men go. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, the magistrates have sent to let you go. Now, therefore, depart and go in peace.

Now, what they discovered, you see, as Paul stayed and didn't flee, and they, you know, talk to the Philippian jail, they find out, you know what? We unjustly beat a Roman citizen. Let's just silently get them out of town and we get in trouble because according to Roman law also, if you unjustly beat a citizen, you are put to death. That was the privilege of Roman citizen.

You had to really be found guilty in a court of law. Well, there was no court of law for Paul, really, that was true and just. And by their very actions, they discovered they were judged and condemned unjustly.

If it gets back to Rome that we beat citizens and there were no crime, we're going to be beaten. So let's just treat them real nice and get them out of town. But you can't do that with Paul.

He's a different type guy. Depart, go in peace. Paul said to them, they've beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans.

Boy, there he slipped that in. He's going to watch him squirm a little bit. Being Romans and have cast us into prison and now do they thrust us out privately, nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

He's just going to, you know, he's going to just twist it a little before he leaves town. Now, isn't it amazing? The Holy Spirit led Paul to lead the jailer and his family to salvation, but wasn't concerned about the judges of the magistrates at this time. Paul didn't feel led or wasn't moved by the Spirit to share the gospel with them.

In fact, he just wanted to make them squirm a little bit. Again, being led by the Spirit. Nay, verily, let them come out themselves and fetch us out.

And the sergeants told these words to the magistrates and they feared. So, God has a purpose in that. How long they feared, whether they heard the gospel later on, but God had a purpose in it.

And here at one house, a family gets saved and the leaders have fear. And when they heard that or when they heard that they were Romans and they came and they besought them and brought them out and desired them to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison and entered into the house of Lydia.

And when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them. You know, it's crazy, Spirit-filled Christians. I go, oh, Lord Jesus, do that in my life.

I get so excited and so thrilled when I see what God can do in a human being instead of them going, oh, you don't know what we went through, man, the jail collapsed, we were beaten. And when we led someone to the Lord, you know, the jailer got saved. But, oh, it's just awful.

It's been an awful, just terrible. You know, there's something about us in the flesh. I just love to throw pity parties.

And I'll invite you if I catch you listening, you know. Oh, woe is me. These guys, they go to Lydia's and they comfort them.

They probably don't even have the blood dried out that much. How can you get healed that quick after being beaten with 39 stripes and then be thrown in jail and then the next day you're going to have the wounds healed? The nerve endings haven't even healed yet. Their bodies are probably throbbing from the pain of the whips and the chunks of glass and bone and metal.

You see, they're so filled with Jesus Christ that they're free from self. I can't figure that out. I just know that it's real and I want it to be so filled with Jesus Christ that I'm free from self.

I can be the most selfish person I want God to do that in my life. Don't you want to be free from self and to be able to be concerned for others? That no matter what your pain, what my pain is, I'm sensitive to comfort someone else. That's Christianity.

That's much more than speaking in tongues or seeing a healing. They're so far greater than what walking in the Spirit is. Forgiving someone who has just brutally beaten you or offended you, to stand there and forgive them and they know you mean it and it changes their life.

You don't do it out of Christian duty. I forgive you. No, it's in your heart.

You forgive them no matter what they've done to you and they know it. They don't know how to handle it. And so you say it's Jesus and you desire to comfort somebody no matter what your pain is.

That's Christianity. That's why I think God says my ways are not your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts.

I have so much love that I can reverse things. I can make life a contrast, a paradox that people can't figure you out just by the way you forgive, not how loud you sing or what prayer language you have or if you can pray for people and their legs are lengthened or they have their healings or you can claim it and possess it. Can you forgive if you've forgiven everybody? Are you still harboring hatred or bitterness or resentment towards somebody? Shall we stand? That's the way the Lord forgave us, isn't it? How He's forgiven us.

The Bible says that when we are yet enemies, Christ died for us. He died at the cross before you and I were born knowing the sin we would commit, knowing that He was going to forgive us. That's love.

Father, we ask you to do a work in our hearts. The work that you did in the Apostle Paul, this is absolutely impossible apart from the Holy Spirit to forgive like Paul, to glorify you in a situation where we can sing praises to you rather than complain. Lord, that's a work of the Holy Spirit that you've promised and Paul is the example.

We thank you, Lord, that you've promised that for us. Keep us, Lord, from shrinking back in whatever direction you lead us in. And Lord, may we share our faith or may people hear our praises, our open

acknowledgement of you our love for you as we respond to your love for us.

And again, Lord, we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit to be sensitive to the needs of others and free us, Lord, from our selfishness, our own pain, to be aware of the pain of those around us as you are. We look to you, Lord. We can't do it without you.

We cry out for it, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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