

# ACTS

## Chapter 16

*Timothy Joins Paul and Silas*

**Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.**

**16:1** *Derbe.* Paul had approached Derbe on the first trip from the opposite direction, so the order of towns is reversed here. (CSB)

*Timothy.* Since Paul addressed him as a young man some 15 years later (see 1Ti 4:12), he must have been in his teens at this time. (CSB)

*father was a Greek.* Statements concerning his mother's faith (here and in 2Ti 1:5) and silence concerning any faith on his father's part suggest that the father was neither a convert to Judaism nor a believer in Christ. (CSB)

In the Dispersion, such marriages were common; language implies his Gk father was not a Christian. (TLSB)

**16:2** *well spoken* – At Lystra Paul was so impressed with Timothy, who enjoyed an excellent reputation among the Christians of the area, that he invited him to accompany them as co-worker. (LL)

**16:3** Paul's first journey began with three people (13:5); the second journey also begins with a team of three. (TLSB)

*circumcised him.* As a matter of expediency so that his work among the Jews might be more effective. This was different from Titus's case (see Gal 2:3), where circumcision was refused because some were demanding it as necessary for salvation. (CSB)

When circumcision was alleged to be a requirement for salvation, Paul refused to circumcise Titus (Gal 2:1–5). With the issue resolved in Ac 15, Paul treats circumcision as an acceptable practice to enable better outreach among Jews. If circumcision is a legalistic requirement, it must be resisted. But as a matter of Christian freedom (*adiaphora*), it may be practiced in ways beneficial to the faith (cf Gal 5:6; 6:15). Luther: “When [Paul] encountered the stubborn Jews who insisted upon circumcision and the law, he took delight in teaching and doing the very opposite; he would not be coerced [Gal. 2:3–5]. But when he came to the weak and simple people he even practiced circumcision [Acts 16:3] and let the law stand, until such time as he might strengthen them and deliver them from the law” (AE 36:253). (TLSB)

This may seem inconsistent but was not: with a Jewish mother, Timothy was considered a Jew in Jewish law. Titus, on the other hand, was a Gentile. (LL)

Now, so that Timothy's work among the Jews who knew that his father was a Gentile would not be hampered, Paul had him circumcised. The action (with Titus) was for the gospel's sake, lest anyone get the impression that Gentiles must be circumcised. The other was also for the gospel's sake, lest the Jews among whom Timothy would work as a missionary be repelled by him before they ever heard the good news about Jesus. (PBC)

**16:5** *strengthened*. The apostles reassured the Gentile believers in the cities of Paul's first journey. This verse concludes the section on the uniting of Jew and Gentile (13:1–16:5). (TLSB)

*increased in numbers daily* – This information, along with Paul's continued instruction, strengthened the faith of the believers and drew others into the fellowship. (PBC)

**16:1–5** Paul begins his second journey with Silas and Timothy. Through them, God continues to reach out with His message, using people as His messengers. Encouragement is still a great blessing to our faith. Share your hope and joy! Jesus is our strength amid all troubles and challenges. • Lord Jesus, may wisdom and love characterize all that we do. Amen. (TLSB)

#### *The Macedonian Call*

**6 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. 8 So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.**

**16:6–10** *Holy Spirit ... Spirit of Jesus ... God*. Note the unity of mission expressed by the persons of the Holy Trinity. (TLSB)

**16:6** Whether by direct revelation or by circumstances (e.g., hostility, illness), Paul was prohibited from traveling west toward Ephesus at this time, as well as north (v 7). Many times Paul's own travel plans did not go as he intended (cf chs 21–23; Rm 1:13; 15:22–32). (TLSB)

*they*. Silas and Timothy. (CSB)

*Phrygia*. The district was formerly the Hellenistic territory of Phrygia, but it had more recently been divided between the Roman provinces of Asia and Galatia. Iconium and Antioch were in Galatian Phrygia. (CSB)

*Galatia*. The name had been used to denote the Hellenistic kingdom, but in 25 B.C. it had been expanded considerably to become the Roman province of that name. (CSB)

*forbidden by the Holy Spirit* – This passage raised many Christian brows, but it does not mean that God was playing favorites with the Gospel. Rather, it was all a matter of timing: Paul would spend many months in Asia and its chief city, Ephesus, on the third mission journey. Now, however, the continent of Europe was waiting for their message. (LL)

*Asia*. This, too, had been a smaller area formerly but now was a Roman province including the Hellenistic districts of Mysia, Lydia, Caria and parts of Phrygia. (CSB)

**16:7** *Mysia*. In the northwest part of the province of Asia. Luke uses these old Hellenistic names, but Paul preferred the provincial (Roman) names. (CSB)

*Bithynia*. A senatorial province formed after 74 B.C., it was west of Mysia. (CSB)

*Spirit of Jesus*. As the “Holy Spirit” was used at times interchangeably with “God” (see 5:3–4), so here “Holy Spirit” is used interchangeably with “Spirit of Jesus.” (CSB)

The Holy Spirit is sent by Jesus (2:33; Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:14); the Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son.” (TLSB)

The expression reminds us that the Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father. (PBC)

*not allow*. The Spirit may have led in any of a number of ways: vision, circumstances, good sense or use of the prophetic gift. (CSB)

**16:8** *Troas*. Located ten miles from ancient Troy. Alexandria Troas (its full name) was a Roman colony and an important seaport for connections between Macedonia and Greece on the one hand and Asia Minor on the other. Paul returned to Troas following his work in Ephesus on his third journey (see 2Co 2:12). At some time—on Paul’s second journey or on his third—a church was started there, for Paul ministered to believers in Troas when he returned from his third journey on his way to Jerusalem (20:5–12). (CSB)

On the coast of the Aegean Sea. (TLSB)

**16:9-15** The Holy Spirit has prevented Paul from going to Asia or Bithynia (16:6–7), but now in Troas he is summoned by the Spirit and sent to Macedonia, in Europe, on God’s mission to proclaim the Gospel. “It is at least clear what Luke intends here: the comments make obvious God’s guidance on the way to Europe. . . . Because they were prevented from going to the left (Asia) and right (Bithynia), the only way remaining was to the west, and the coast” (Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], 127). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

God is the one who opens and shuts doors for his Gospel to move as a “summer rain” (Luther) to create saving faith “where and when he wills” (AC V 3). It might be appropriate to quote at length Wilhelm Löhe’s definition of missions: “The Church of the New Testament . . . one Church of all nations, one Church with children in all countries and collecting them out of all countries, the one herd of the one Shepherd, gathered from various folds (Jn 10:10), the *common, truly catholic* Church, transversing all times and finding confluence from all nations—*she is the big idea that is still becoming fulfilled, God’s work in the last hours of this world, the favorite thought of all saints in life and in death for which they lived and are living, died and are dying—the thought which necessarily pervades all missions, or she does not know, what she is or what she should be*. For the mission is nothing else than God’s one Church in motion—the realization of one common, catholic Church. Wherever this Church enters, there walls, which separate nations, fall; wherever she comes, she brings together those who were previously deeply divided; where she gains room she creates the wonderful unity, which enables the people from all different languages to understand each other in *all matters*” (Wilhelm Löhe, *Gesammelte Werke vol. 5*

[Neuendettelsau: Freimund Verlag, 1954], 96; author's translation). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

**16:9 vision.** One of the ways God gave direction (cf. 10:3). (CSB)

Perhaps in a dream during the night. (TLSB)

Most probably a dream. Dreams carried far more significance in the ancient world than today, and the Bible records repeated instances where they served as a vehicle for communication between God and people. (LL)

It is not clear whether this vision is given to Paul as a dream while asleep or while he was awake. However, a man (singular male) from Macedonia (possibly identifying traditional garb and language) appears to Paul, exhorting him to come to Macedonia. This double emphasis on Macedonia dispels all doubt about the destination intended. What the help is about is not spelled out; however, it can be assumed that Paul has what is called for (cf. Acts 3:6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

This v 9 was used as one of the main missionary texts of the Enlightenment. David Bosch elaborates on the “matrix of the Enlightenment”: “On the one hand, it spawned an attitude of tolerance to all people and a relativistic attitude toward belief of any kind; on the other, it gave birth to Western superiority feelings and prejudice, . . . tolerance as well as intolerance, relativism as well as bigotry could often be found side by side in the same person or group” (David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991], 289, 339ff, 344). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

However, even if there is the possible misuse, which Bosch highlights and which concerns others lording it over others just because they can or feel they should, this passage illustrates that there is a legitimate call for help from brothers and sisters in need—a global responsibility, connectedness, and ecclesial partnership flowing from the God-given fellowship/communion of the sharing of the very same holy things (Word and Sacrament) among the limbs of Christ's Body, the Church (cf. 1 Cor 12:26)—that those who have will help those who don't and that a God-pleasing exchange will happen for the common good (cf. 1 Cor 12:7, 11, 25; 2 Cor 9:12). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

*man of Macedonia.* Macedonia had become a Roman province in 148 B.C. There is no indication that the man of the vision is Luke, as some have suggested, but he does join the group at this point. (CSB)

West across the Aegean Sea; modern northern Greece. This may be the first time the Gospel moves from Asia onto the continent of Europe. (TLSB)

Was that Roman province which covered the area which today includes Yugoslavia. To go to Macedonia meant to take the gospel to the continent of Europe. (PBC)

**16:10 we sought to go.** This is where the “we” passages of Acts begin. The conclusion is that Luke is informing the reader that he had joined the party at Troas. (CSB)

First of the so-called “we” sections of Acts. (TLSB)

Paul, together with his fellow missionaries, is instructed by this vision that God is calling them to preach the Gospel to the Macedonians. The mission to Europe was not following a human whim, but rather divine inspiration. This does not mean that all our dreams are divinely inspired, but rather that in this case Paul as apostle of the Lord was under compulsion, calling, and mission of the triune God. It also shows that God is free to guide, lead, and call his people in special ways, where and when it pleases him to do so. It is worth noting that this evaluation was not taken by St. Paul alone, but rather by the team (plural “we” and “us”). Further, it is clarified that the help to be given is Gospel preaching and teaching. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

**16:6–10** God guided Paul and his companions in unexpected directions. Our plans in general, and in particular our plans for the spread of the Gospel, do not always proceed as we hope. Yet, God directs us as His messengers to the people and places He would have us go. His grace is not bounded by our weakness but serves His good purposes in Christ. • Heavenly Father, continue to send workers into Your harvest field. Enable missionaries, evangelists, and pastors to always see their ministry as a calling from You. Amen. (TLSB)

#### *The Conversion of Lydia*

**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[d] 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.**

**16:11-12** “The fact that the trip goes so well is a confirmation of the . . . vision” (Conzelmann, 129). Louis Harms, the father of the Hermannsburg Missions, wanted his missionary teams to get to Ethiopia. Although they were prevented from reaching their goal four times, Harms never gave up. Did he see this as a challenge to his faithfulness, determination, and dedication to God’s calling, or was it just Saxon stubbornness? During his lifetime, the Hermannsburg missionaries did not make it to Ethiopia. The questions remain open: when is a mission goal God-given and when is it a fiction of our own mind? This calls for spiritual discernment, openness for God’s guidance, and the realization that we human beings are fallible and make serious errors of judgment even if we believe we are pleasing God (cf. Rom 10:2; Jn 16:2). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

**16:11** *Samothrace*. An island in the northeastern Aegean Sea. It was a convenient place for boats to anchor rather than risk sailing at night. (CSB)

*Neapolis*. The seaport for Philippi, ten miles away; modern Kavalla. (CSB)

**16:12** *Philippi*. A city in eastern Macedonia named after Philip II, father of Alexander the Great (see map of “Philippi”). Since it was a Roman colony, it was independent of provincial administration and had a governmental organization modeled after that of Rome. Many retired legionnaires from the Roman army settled there, but few Jews. See Introduction to Philippians: Recipients. (CSB)

*leading city.* Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia. But Macedonia had four districts, and Philippi was in the first of these. Amphipolis, however, was the first city of that district. Luke may have intended to say that it was “a” leading city (there is no article in the Greek), or that it was the first city reached from the border, or that its fame and significance made it truly the leading city of the area. (CSB)

**16:13** *on the Sabbath* - “And on the Sabbath day . . .” Paul and his missionary companions look for a place of prayer—a synagogue or related place, where Jews would gather on this day. They do not find a sanctuary in the city, but rather an informal gathering of women outside the city walls alongside a river. Although in the vision they were called by “a man,” Paul and his companions don’t hesitate, but sit down to teach this gathering. That’s the insignificant starting point for missions in Europe—nothing established, just a “humble beginning.” Nothing is said about the kind of worship practices there or what they were reading, discussing, or doing. However, it is stressed that Paul and his fellows do the talking. They are the messengers, the evangelists, teachers, missionaries, and apostles. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

Regular day of worship for those who followed the God of Israel. (TLSB)

*a place of prayer.* There were so few Jews in Philippi that there was no synagogue, so the Jews who were there met for prayer along the banks of the Gangites River (see map of “Philippi”). It was customary for such places of prayer to be located outdoors near running water. (CSB)

Apparently there were few Jews, particularly Jewish men, and therefore no synagogue in Philippi. (TLSB)

Ten men were needed to form a synagogue and Philippi had only a small Jewish population. Places erected near water so that the ceremonial washings prescribed in the Jewish law could be performed. (PBC)

*women* – Luke and Acts highlight the role of women, the only worshipers of God present on this occasion. (TLSB)

**16:14** *Lydia.* A businesswoman. Her name may be associated with her place of origin, the Hellenistic district of Lydia. (CSB)

Lydia, this first European convert, was a “proselyte of the gate” (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1944], 657) and as such already attracted to Judaism and the living God. It is he who “opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.” This is an illustration of what the Church confesses (cf. AC V). “All the women at the prayer-place heard the missionaries speak, but all did not heed as Lydia did. . . . In Lydia we have a beautiful example of adult conversion” (Lenski, 658–59). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

*Thyatira.* In the Roman province of Asia, 20 miles southeast of Pergamum (in the Hellenistic kingdom of Lydia). It was famous for its dyeing works, especially royal purple (crimson). (CSB)

City in Asia Minor; a center for the manufacture of purple dye. (TLSB)

*seller of purple goods* – The expensive dye made a profitable trade. (TLSB)

*worshiper of God.* Lydia was a Gentile who, like Cornelius (see 10:2), believed in the true God and followed the moral teachings of Scripture. She had not, however, become a full convert to Judaism. (CSB)

*opened her heart.* After the resurrection the minds of the disciples were opened to understand the Scriptures (Lk 24:45); similarly, Lydia’s heart was opened to respond to the gospel message of Paul. (CSB)

Paul spoke the message, and the Lord worked through it to create a faithful response. “With this Word the Holy Spirit is present and opens hearts, so that people (like Lydia in Acts 16:14) pay attention to it and are converted only through the Holy Spirit’s grace and power, who alone does the work of converting a person” (FC Ep II 5). (TLSB)

**16:15** *she was baptized and her household* – As is common in Ac, Baptism is granted immediately and is bestowed on the entire household along with its head (cf 10:44–48). *household.* Term includes children and servants. (TLSB)

*come to my house and stay* – Her home became their headquarters for mission work in Philippi. Her household provided the nucleus of a congregation in that city. (PBC)

Lydia offered the hospitality of her home, which likely became a gathering place for the Philippian believers. (TLSB)

Although this is sometimes used as an example for infant Baptism, there is no direct reference to it (Conzelmann, 130 [especially footnote 13]). However, we do hear about Lydia’s hospitality and that this urging from her side was accepted by the missionaries. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 23, Part 2)

**16:11–15** Paul begins his work in Philippi through Lydia. At times, Christians may feel isolated from worship and fellowship. Yet, God opens the hearts of people to believe, provides others who are faithful to the Lord, and binds them together in homes and families. • Heavenly Father, we thank You for opening the door of faith to many faithful women throughout the ages—Sarah, Deborah, Ruth, Esther, Elizabeth, Mary, and Lydia. Guide and bless women today to be equally receptive to Your Word. In the name of our Lord Jesus, the Son of Mary. Amen. (TLSB)

*Paul and Silas in Prison*

**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.**

**16:16** *she had a spirit of divination.* A “python” spirit, a demonic spirit. The python was a mythical snake worshiped at Delphi and associated with the Delphic oracle. The term “python” came to be used of the persons through whom the python spirit supposedly spoke. Since such persons spoke involuntarily, the term “ventriloquist” was used to describe them. To what extent she actually predicted the future is not known. (CSB)

Demonic powers are able to predict the future, so it is no certain sign that God is at work in a person (cf Dt 13:1–5). Here the girl is being used to generate profit. (TLSB)

The claim was accurate enough, but coming from a gypsy (they were and are generally looked down upon) who profited from fortune-telling, it could hardly help the Christian cause. (LL)

Fortune-telling is the devil’s work, and the devil was using her to turn people’s thoughts away from God’s will and God’s word. The girl’s shouts were not an attempt to preach the gospel to help Paul and the other missionaries. It was an attempt to interrupt and embarrass those who preached the gospel. This kind of unwelcome testimony has also occurred during Jesus’ ministry. Where Jesus and his gospel are, there the devil will use any and every means to stifle the good news and frustrate God’s gracious purpose. (PBC)

**16:17–18** As in Jesus’ ministry, the demons recognize God’s presence at work and are driven to respond (cf Lk 4:34, 41). (TLSB)

**16:17** *followed Paul and us.* The “we” section (see note on v. 10) ends here and begins again in 20:5. (CSB)

*Most High God.* A title used by the man possessed by an evil spirit (Mk 5:7). It was a common title among both Jews (see Nu 24:16; Isa 14:14; Da 3:26) and Greeks (found in inscriptions). But the title is not used of God in the NT by Christians or Jews (cf. Ac 7:48). (CSB)

**16:19** *marketplace before the rulers.* The rulers were apparently overseeing the buying and selling that took place at the city’s main place of commerce (Gk *agora*). (TLSB)

**16:20** *magistrates.* The Greek term *strategos* (Latin *praetor*), not the usual word but a term of courtesy used in some Roman colonies, such as Philippi. (CSB)

Unusual term of respect, probably because of Philippi’s status as a Roman colony (v 12). (TLSB)

*Jews.* The antagonism between Jews and Gentiles went both ways; here the contrast is with the Romans. (TLSB)

**16:21** *customs that are not lawful.* If a religion failed to receive Roman approval, it was considered *religio illicita*. Judaism had legal recognition, but Christianity did not. (CSB)

Slandorous statement, since the OT religion was officially sanctioned and legally practiced (*religio licita*) in the empire. Christianity was not yet distinguished from Judaism (cf 18:12–15). (TLSB)



Jews were not supposed to make converts of Roman citizens. The girl's exploiters seized on this as a convenient charge against the missionaries. (LL)

The real motive behind the charge was, of course, anger that they had lost their source of income when the slave girl was relieved of the evil spirit. (see Matthew 8:28-34) (PBC)

**16:22** *beat them* with rods. City officials order Paul and Silas to be stripped of their clothes and severely beaten, an illegal punishment (v 37). (TLSB)

**16:23** *threw them into prison* – They were thrown into the city prison, where the jailer consigned them to an inner cell and anchored their feet in stocks – part security and part torture, since the wooden frame forced their legs apart in a cramped position. Rather than bemoan their condition, Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns until midnight. Surprisingly, the other prisoners “were listening to them” instead of yelling derisive catcalls or obscenities. (LL)

They could pray and sing hymns because they trusted the living Lord Jesus and because he gave them the strength. (PBC)

**16:24** *inner prison ... stocks*. Used not only for extra security but also for torture. (CSB)

Place of added security, and perhaps additional torture as well; archaeologists have located this city jail in Philippi's ruins. *stocks*. Secure and painful. (TLSB)

**16:16–24** Paul heals a demon-possessed girl, and as a result, he and Silas are beaten and jailed. Believers who do God's will, even when striving to help others, can expect mistreatment and abuse from the people and institutions of this world. However, the same name and power that freed this slave girl from demonic captivity deliver us from suffering to eternal life. • Heavenly Father, the powers of evil still try to torment us. As we strive to do Your will, deliver us from evil, and assure us that through Christ's death and resurrection, the victory over evil is already won. Amen. (TLSB)

#### *The Philippian Jailer Converted*

**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[e] 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.**

**16:25** *praying and singing.* Inspiring response to harsh mistreatment. (TLSB)

*prisoners were listening.* Their worship was a powerful witness to others in the jail. (TLSB)

**16:27** *about to kill himself.* If a prisoner escaped, the life of the guard was demanded in his place (see 12:19). To take his own life would shorten the shame and distress. (CSB)

If a Roman guard lost his prisoner, the penalty was death; the jailer is about to carry out what he assumes is inevitable. (TLSB)

**6:28** *all here.* Despite the open doors, no prisoner had left! The jailer did not need to fear punishment. (TLSB)

**16:30–33** Walther: “The Gospel does not require anything good that man must furnish: not a good heart, not a good disposition, no improvement of his condition, no godliness, no love either of God or men. It issues no orders, but it changes man. It plants love into his heart and makes him capable of all good works. It demands nothing, but it gives all. Should not this fact make us leap for joy?... Observe that the Gospel bestows the faith which it demands” (*L & G*, p 16). (TLSB)

**16:30** *what must I do to be saved?* The jailer had heard that these were preachers of a way of salvation (v. 17). Now with the earthquake and his own near death, he wanted to know about the way. (CSB)

The ultimate question. Those who ask it often place the emphasis on what they must do (e.g., Lk 10:25; 18:18); here the jailer stresses his need for rescue and salvation. (TLSB)

God does not usually use an earthquake to make people aware of their need for salvation. Sometimes it is a mild heart attack, a slight stroke, a small tumor, a microscope virus or a minor accident. But when people who have been careless about spiritual things know that they must meet their maker and judge, they often ask the jailer’s question. (PBC)

**16:31** *Believe in the Lord Jesus.* A concise statement of the way of salvation (see 10:43). (CSB)

*your household.* The message would permeate his household. Others are saved not by the jailer’s faith but by their own hearing and believing (v 32). (TLSB)

**16:32** *word of the Lord.* See 10:36. Paul and Silas explained the gospel more thoroughly to the jailer and to all the other members of his household, and they all believed in Christ and were saved (v. 34). (CSB)

Whether using OT texts or words of the Lord Jesus (or both), Paul and Silas speak the message of salvation to the entire household. Salvation came to them through the Word and the Sacrament of Baptism (v 33). (TLSB)

**16:33** *washed their wounds.* From the earlier beating (v 22). (TLSB)

*baptized at once, he and all his family.* Reminiscent of Peter's visit to Cornelius's household (10:34–48). Baptism is immediate and for the entire family. (TLSB)

**16:34** *household.* Before, described members of the jailer's household (v 32); now Paul and Silas enter the actual home. (TLSB)

*rejoiced.* The consistent consequence of conversion, regardless of circumstances. (CSB)

The jailer's faith in the Lord Jesus had turned his suicidal fear into joy! (TLSB)

**16:35** *magistrates. police.* Officers sent by the city's leaders (cf v 20). After the previous day's punishment, Paul and Silas are going to be released. (TLSB)

**16:37** *Roman citizens.* Magistrates could punish noncitizens without proper legal proceedings, but Paul and Silas were Roman citizens; hence the dismay of the city officials (vv 38–39). (TLSB)

*Let themselves and take us out.* Paul and Silas were not asking for an escort to salve their injured pride as much as they were establishing their innocence for the sake of the church in Philippi and its future. (CSB)

**16:39** The city officials could now be in trouble. They politely ask Paul and Silas to leave. (TLSB)

**16:40** *they went out of the prison.* Either Paul and Silas had returned to the prison earlier in the morning, or they were at the jailer's home nearby. (TLSB)

*they had seen the brothers* – Paul and Silas did not leave without meeting with the small and young group of believers at Philippi to encourage them. Luke and Timothy remained behind to continue building up the church in that place. (PBC)

*encouraged.* Before leaving, they visited Lydia and the other believers, who were certainly uplifted by these events. (TLSB)

**16:25–40** Paul and Silas are freed from prison. The Lord brings a Philippian jailer and his family to faith. Like Paul and Silas, God's people today can respond to mistreatment with a powerful testimony of prayer and praise to God. Like the despairing jailer (v 27), all people are sinners who face death (Rm 3:9; 6:23). But all are saved by trusting in the Lord Jesus. • Father, assure me of the simplicity of this good news: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (v 31). Then move me to respond with a life of worship and praise to You, whatever my earthly situation may be. Amen. (TLSB)