



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

"RIDING THROUGH"

THE BOOK OF ACTS-LESSON 16

Chapter 16 is an action-packed, exciting chapter! Paul meets a new traveling companion, gets a vision from the Lord, sees a woman named Lydia converted in the city of Philippi, casts a demonic spirit out of a slave girl, goes to jail, gets set free by an earthquake, witnesses the Philippian jailer and his family get saved, and then is released from prison. Wow, what a mouthful!

Paul continues his second missionary journey, accompanied by Silas instead of Barnabas. Remember in chapter 15, Paul and Barnabas had a disagreement over whether or not to take John Mark with them. Unable to come to an agreement, they split up, with Barnabas and Mark going to Cyprus, while Paul and Silas head for Syria and Cilicia. They reach the Galatian cities of Derbe and Lystra.

There is a lot to learn in this chapter. I believe that God has great things in store for us. Make sure to pray before you begin, asking God to open your ears, eyes, and heart to anything He has to say to you.

First Day

1. Read Acts 16:1-40. Take notes, jotting down any new thoughts or interesting facts that you find. Define any words that are unfamiliar to you.
2. Name the main characters and the main point in each section:
 - a. Section I: Verses 1-5
 - b. Section II: Verses 6-15
 - c. Section III: Verses 16-24
 - d. Section IV: Verses 25-34
 - e. Section V: Verses 35-40
3. Whom does Paul meet in Lystra in verses 1-5?

4. Paul and his new friend become very close. Read the following Scriptures and write a brief character sketch about young Timothy: Acts 16:1-5, Romans 16:21, 1 Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 2:19-23, 1 Timothy 5:23, 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15.
5. Did Timothy have a good reputation in the community? (Acts 16:2)
6. What does the word "reputation" mean?
7. As a Christian, why is it so important to have a good reputation in the community? Give Scriptures to support your answer.
8. What is your reputation like in the community? Are you seen as honest, dependable, and trustworthy? Can people count on your word? How would someone in the community that you deal with describe you?
9. If your reputation isn't very good, what changes can you make? Will you ask the Holy Spirit to give you the strength to make those changes?
10. Why did Paul think that it was necessary to circumcise Timothy? (vs 3)
11. Did this contradict the decision that was just made at the Jerusalem council? Why or why not?

Timothy became one of Paul's favorite companions (Philippians 2:19-23). He possibly was converted during Paul's first missionary trip to Lystra, since Paul saw him as a "son in the faith" (1 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Timothy 1:2).

Paul thought that because Timothy wasn't circumcised, the Jews would reject him. This circumcision was not for salvation, but was performed to make Timothy acceptable to Jewish audiences. This would increase his usefulness in the ministry. This was not done for the purpose of humoring the Judaizing Christians.

This ends our lesson for today. I can't seem to stop thinking about our reputations. How important it is to glorify God by the way we live our life. Are you glorifying Him or bringing Him shame? Think about it!

Memory Verse of the Week: "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." Acts 16:25

Second Day

Practice your memory verse. Would you be singing if you were in prison?

Paul and Silas continue their journey by way of Phrygia and the region of Galatia. Paul desired to preach the Word in the Roman Province of Asia, but God had other plans for him.

1. Read Acts 16:6-10. Locate these places on a Bible map.
2. What (or who!) prevented Paul and Silas from going into Asia?
3. What other place were they not allowed to go?

Paul knocked on the doors of opportunity in Asia, but the doors were firmly closed. I wonder how Paul felt. Was he discouraged? Confused? Frustrated? It's comforting in a way to know that even Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, wasn't always clear on what God's will was for his life. God definitely had other plans for Paul's life. He didn't shut the doors to chastise him, but rather to guide him to something better. Europe was waiting around the bend. Paul just couldn't see it.

4. What are some ways that God "shuts doors" in our life?
5. Has God ever shut a door on something that you really believed was from Him? How did you respond? Did you give up or continue on, knowing that God had something else waiting for you around the bend?
6. Is God shutting a door in your life right now? Why do you think so? How is He doing it?
7. How do we know if God is shutting the door or the enemy is putting up an obstacle to hinder the work of the Lord?

How did the Holy Spirit forbid Paul to go? The word "forbid" is derived from an older Greek word "kolo" which means "to cut short," "to trim," or "to lop." The Holy Spirit definitely cut that trip short! We don't know how the Holy Spirit revealed His will to Paul -- maybe in a vision, or a dream, or through the words of a

prophet. (Remember, Silas was a prophet.) They may have had to change their plans due to circumstances, forcing them not to be able to enter Asia. Perhaps Paul just had strong inner convictions while seeking the Lord.

Some scholars believe that it may have been at this time that Paul received his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-8 and Galatians 4:13-15), which most believe to be some type of eye disease. Paul was a very bold, strong man, and some think that ill health may have been the only obstacle that would hold him back from pushing on into Asia.

We notice that the pronouns change in verse 10 from "they" to "we." Luke apparently joins this group in Troas and now speaks from eye witness experience. We recall that Luke is a doctor. Could Paul's health be the reason that Luke joins the team at this time? Did Paul need to be under his personal care? We don't know the answers to these questions, but it sure is fun to think about!

8. Has God been opening a new door in your life? Are you scared to step through it? Are you willing to alter your course to get in God's will?

If God is shutting a door in your life, He has a better way for you to go. Are you willing to accept that?

9. Read Revelation 3:7b-8a. What did Jesus say to the church of Philadelphia? How does this verse minister to you?

In Acts 16:8, Paul and Silas stop in the Roman colony and seaport of Troas.

10. Explain Paul's vision. Did he hesitate to respond?

For Paul, this vision cleared up any confusion on where he was supposed to go. Paul saw things so simply -- God said go; Paul went! How I long and pray for a heart like Paul's -- so willing to do and respond to God's will.

11. Define hesitation. When is it good and when is it bad? What is the difference between hesitating and waiting on the Lord?

Notice again that the pronoun "we" is used three times in the book of Acts. (16:10-17, 20:5-21:18, and 27:1-28:16) As you continue reading, does it seem that Luke uses more detail when describing events that he was actually a witness to?

This ends today's lesson. I pray that you're rejoicing over the many doors of opportunities God has given you! Which door is your **"Reason to Rejoice"** today?

Third Day

What's your memory verse? Who's watching how you respond to trials?

1. Read Acts 16:11-15

Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy left Troas and sailed to Neapolis, a port of Philippi. This trip took about two days. They must have had great weather, because the reverse journey took them five days (20:6).

Samothrace (16:11) was a mountainous island which was halfway between the two ports, where they probably anchored for the night.

From the port of Neapolis, they journeyed 10 miles to the city of Philippi. Acts 16:12 refers to Philippi as a foremost or chief city of that part of Macedonia. It was not the capital of Macedonia, or the capital city of its district. The term "chief city" was an honorary title given to certain cities. Philippi probably earned its title by helping Caesar Augustus defeat his enemies in 42 B.C. Later, Augustus gave them the privilege of being exempt from their taxes forever.

Roman colonies were organized by the state. These colonies were usually populated by Roman citizens, especially retired military people. These actually became military outposts and were usually located in strategic areas. The people in these colonies were given all the rights of Roman citizens; they were exempt from paying taxes, and were treated like they were actually living in Italy. This was their reward for leaving their home country.

The city of Philippi was named after Philip II, father of the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great. This city was very strategically located on the Egnatian Way, which was the main land route between Asia and the West.

2. What did the team do on the Sabbath day?

Usually Paul would first go to the synagogue to preach. We remember from previous lessons that a city needed at least 10 male Jews to have a synagogue. Obviously this city did not have a high Jewish population. Because of his vision, Paul probably thought that he would be meeting a man in Macedonia. Instead, he finds himself face to face with a bunch of praying women!

This meeting is further evidence that the Gospel really did change Paul's life. Jewish men would never speak to women in public -- it was a disgrace! But Paul not

only spoke to them, he shared the Savior with them. Paul was truly learning how to put to death the ways of his old nature. We also have to learn to die to our old habits and ways.

3. Are you clinging to any of your old ways? Do you find yourself making excuses like, that's just how I am, or I was brought up this way? What old ways and habits do you still need Jesus to change in your life?
4. Has the Gospel changed your life? In what way? I know this question has been asked in our lessons before, but it's a very important one to meditate on. **How has Jesus Christ changed your life?**

5. What do we know about Lydia? How would you describe her?

Lydia was a "worshiper of God," meaning that she was not a full proselyte, but she openly worshiped with the Jews.

She was also a "seller of purple." She was from the city of Thyatira, a place that was famous for its purple dye. The dye was gathered from a certain shellfish and was very costly. She could have either sold the dye itself or garments made with the dye.

6. How did she respond to Paul's message?

The term "opened her heart" means to "open up completely." She completely surrendered her all to God. God wants us to do the same. He wants us to surrender to Him completely, without any reservations.

7. Read Psalm 86:11-12 and 1 Kings 8:61. What kind of heart should we have?
8. Can your heart be described as "undivided"? If not, what's dividing it? Busyness? Self? Money? Popularity? Friends? How would you describe your heart today?

Lydia was a business woman, but as soon as she accepts the Lord, He becomes her first priority. Is Christ your first priority?

9. What did Lydia do as proof of her conversion? (Acts 16:15)

Lydia had the gift of hospitality (Romans 12). After she was baptized, she asks them to come and stay with her. The word used is "constrained," and means to employ force contrary to nature, to compel or to insist. The team stayed in her house again, in verse 40, when Paul and Silas get out of prison.

10. Is your house open to the Lord? Have you given it to the Lord to use for His purposes -- prayer meetings, Bible studies, missionaries, friends in need, neighborhood children? Do you see your home as a base to minister from?

We may not all have the "gift" of hospitality, but we should all be willing to give God everything we have, allowing Him to use it for His glory. I read a quote once that said, "**A Christian home is one with an ever-open door.**"

Lydia was the first convert to Christianity in Europe. As a result of this women's prayer group, the first church in Macedonia was founded in Philippi. Paul revisited this church on his third missionary journey. Eleven years after this meeting, Paul wrote the letter to the church in Philippi, thanking them for their help in his time of need, and encouraging them in the Lord. This church always seemed to hold a special place in Paul's heart. And it all started with a women's prayer group!!
Rejoice!

Fourth Day

Can you repeat your memory verse?

Once upon a time, in the city of Philippi, Paul meets two women as he goes out to pray. First he meets a woman named Lydia, who opens her heart to the Lord after she hears the Gospel. As he set out to pray again, he meets another girl, whose heart was definitely opened to the spirit -- but the wrong spirit!

1. Read Acts 16:16-24.
2. What was the slave girl doing? What was she possessed with?

The text literally says that she has a spirit, a Python. The word "divination" comes from the Greek word "pathon," which is python in English. In Greek mythology, the name of the dragon or serpent that dwelt in the city of Pytho was called Pythian. It dwelt at the foot of Mt. Parnassus and guarded the temple of Delphi. This serpent was supposedly slain by the god Apollo. Later, the word was applied to diviners and soothsayers, because they were thought to be inspired by the god Apollos, who now embodied this serpent (Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words).

This slave girl was actually demon possessed. The townspeople deemed her as crazy, but the ancient world had some type of strange respect for mad people. They believed that the gods had taken away their wits in order to put the minds of the gods into them (William Barclay).

3. Was this demon telling the truth? If so, why was Paul annoyed?
4. What did Jesus do when demons spoke the truth? Read Mark 1:21-28 and Luke 4:41.

Jesus always refused the testimony of demons, even when they spoke the truth. Satan can tell a lie one minute, the truth the next, then mix the two together. How would the world know the difference? Even if it was the truth, it would be more confusing than helpful. The demon here in Acts, and those mentioned in the previous question, definitely recognize the presence and power of God.

5. Do you think that all fortune-tellers are people just putting on a show, or could the fortunes be coming from satan?

Demons do have the ability to forecast the future. **Merrill Unger** gives us some further insight:

"Paul's encounter with the mediumistic fortune-teller at Philippi demonstrates that not everything in fortune-telling is fraud and humbug. Real fortune-telling powers are demonic. The girl told the truth, receiving her knowledge from demons. Her commendation of Paul and Silas as "servants of the Most High God" demonstrates the subtlety of satan in gaining followers for later deception. This incident proves how frequently satan parades as a angel of light, especially under the guise of alleged religiosity." (Demons in the World Today)

6. When Paul exorcised the demon:
 - a. Was he intimidated?
 - b. Whom did he speak to? The girl or the demon?
 - c. Did Paul ask or command the demon to leave?
 - d. In whose authority did he cast it out?
 - e. Did it work?
7. Why were the girl's masters so angry? What was their motivation? Why was this demon and its power to tell fortunes, their "hope of profit"?

8. Why do you think they only blamed Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace? What about Luke and Timothy?

The marketplace was their forum, where the courthouse and the prison were. Remember that Philippi was a Roman colony, and active proselytizing of a Roman citizen was not allowed. The Jewish religion was merely tolerated, not encouraged. In fact, the year before, Emperor Claudius issued an edict expelling Jews from Roma (Acts 18:2).

Maybe Paul and Silas were singled out, not only because they were the leaders of the team, but because they were the only ones who were full Jews. Timothy was half Greek, and Luke was completely Greek.

The whole incident was motivated by greed, prejudice, and lies. The townspeople believed the slander and attacked them.

9. What did they do to Paul and Silas? (Vs 22-24)
 10. Paul refers to this incident in three different letters. Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-25, Philippians 1:29-30, and 1 Thessalonians 2:2. Why do you think he mentions this? What point was he making?

The inner prison (vs 24) was most likely a dungeon with a door secured by a bar. The stocks would be fastened to the wall. This is awful! How could this happen? They were only doing what was right, by ridding this girl of a demon and restoring her back to her senses. What kind of thank you was this? I wonder why Paul and Silas didn't claim their Roman citizenship at that time (Acts 16:37-38). It was against the law to do this to Romans. Obviously Paul was using wisdom from the Holy Spirit and was saving that information for the right time.

Notice that the word "we" used in Acts 16:17 is not used again until Acts 20:5-6. It is thought that maybe Luke stayed behind in Philippi to build up and teach the new believers there.

Have you ever been persecuted for doing the right thing? Have you ever been slandered, and people believed it? What did you do? We'll find out what Paul and Silas did tomorrow, but for now, let's remember that "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). That's a "**Reason to Rejoice**," isn't it?

Fifth Day

Write out your memory verse. Meditate on what this verse really means.

Today we reach the highlight of this chapter. To me, the miracle is more than God miraculously releasing Paul and Silas from prison. The biggest miracle was the attitude they could have as they went through this trial.

1. Read Acts 16:25-40.
2. What were Paul and Silas doing while in prison?
3. Do we hear them complain or condemn anyone?

We now come across verse 25, which is our memory verse this week. This verse reminds us that others are watching how we respond to the trials we go through in our life. God wants to be glorified not only by the outcome of the trial, but also by our attitudes as we go through them. Paul and Silas were a testimony to the grace and glory of God in the middle of their persecution. This is only possible as we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.

4. Think of a trial you're in right now (or recently went through). What is your attitude like? Are you offering prayers and praise to the Lord? Are you moaning and complaining? Are you a testimony of God's glory or are you causing others to doubt God's power?
5. How did your response to your trial affect your family? Your friends?

Sometimes we feel like we're being beaten up by the world, like Paul and Silas. Other times we feel like we're being beaten down. Jon Courson said, "If you're being beaten up like Paul and Silas, God will work **THROUGH** you. If you're being beaten down, God will work **FOR** you."

Whichever way we feel, we can rejoice, knowing that the enemy won't win. Jesus died on the cross and was victorious over death and sin. Jesus was beaten up, so we don't have to be. Jesus was beaten down, so we could be lifted up.

6. Are you allowing your trial to beat you down? Read Isaiah 54:17 and 1 John 5:4-5. How do these Scriptures give you hope?
7. How did God respond to the prayers and singing of Paul and Silas?

Praising God through prayer and singing can free you from any prison you're in.

8. Do you feel chained? Have your trials imprisoned you in such a way that you are under their power? Have you tried prayer and praise? Have you tried lifting your

voice to God, exalting Him for His power and His might? Ask God today to give you a heart full of praise, and watch your attitude change.

9. How did the jailer respond? (vs 27-30).

The jailer decided that suicide would be better than the punishment that awaited him if the prisoners were found gone.

10. Did the prisoners flee? (vs 28)

Paul could have fled when the doors opened, he could have held a grudge against the jailer, or even allowed the jailer to kill himself. But Paul was concerned with his soul, not revenge.

11. What question did the jailer ask Paul in verse 30?

The jailer wanted salvation for himself. What impressed him the most? Was it the earthquake? The previous teachings of Paul and Silas in the city? Was it the way Paul and Silas handled themselves in prison? Was it a combination of everything? We don't know, but we can see that what we say and do around others is extremely important!

12. What was Paul's response in verse 31?

What great news! Believe and be saved! No law, no gimmicks, just believe in Jesus. We receive new life through faith in Jesus Christ. The Philippian jailer exercised that faith.

Forsake All I Take Him.

Have you received Jesus Christ by faith? Have you forsaken all?

Verse 31 does not imply that the jailer's entire household would be saved automatically. The fact that the Word was proclaimed to the whole household (vs 32) shows that the belief required of the jailer was necessary for them too. Each sinner must accept Christ personally in order to be born again.

13. According to Acts 16:33, what two things did the jailer do to prove his conversion?

14. What do you think the atmosphere was like at the jailer's house now? Were they fearful? (vs 34)
15. The officials wanted Paul and Silas to leave quietly (vs 36). Why?
16. Why didn't Paul and Silas want to sneak away quietly?

Paul now chooses to bring out the fact that he and Silas were Roman citizens. This was a shame and an embarrassment for the officials. They changed their attitude a little and asked Paul and Silas politely to leave town (vs 38-39). Paul wanted to leave behind a strong Christian witness for Christ in Philippi. If they left quietly, there would always be the suspicion that they had done something wrong. They were also probably trying to ensure protection for the Christians who remained in Philippi, who may otherwise have suffered continued persecution.

17. Where did Paul and Silas go when they got out of prison? (vs 40) What did they do there?

One thing that really ministered to me was that when Paul and Silas went to Lydia's home, they were the ones who were doing the encouraging! They were beaten, put in prison unjustly, and now, instead of needing to be encouraged, they are doing it! God gives incredible strength to those who are living in His will and relying on His grace to carry them through.

18. Think of the trial you're in right now. Maybe it's a job thing, or a money thing, or a health thing. Where is your focus? Is it on that trial? Can you try to encourage someone else who's struggling? I challenge you to do it and watch how God works in your attitude and your life.

This ends our lesson for this week. This sure was an action-packed chapter. I pray that God spoke to your heart as you allowed His Word to penetrate deep down into every corner. I pray that you had lots of **"Reasons to Rejoice"** this week.