

CHAPTER 16

It is some rebuke to Barnabas that after he left Paul we hear no more of him, of what he did or suffered for Christ. But Paul, as he was recommended by the brethren to the grace of God, so his services for Christ after this are largely recorded; we are to attend him in this chapter from place to place, wherever he came doing good, either watering or planting, beginning new work or improving what was done. Here is,

- I.** The beginning of his acquaintance with Timothy, and taking him to be his assistant (v. 1-3).
- II.** The visit he made to the churches for their establishment (v. 4, 5).
- III.** His call to Macedonia (after a restraint he had been under from going to some other places), and his coming to Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia, with his entertainment there (v. 6-13).
- IV.** The conversion of Lydia there (v. 14, 15).
- V.** The casing of an evil spirit out of a damsel (v. 16-18).
- VI.** The accusing and abusing of Paul and Silas for it, their imprisonment, and the indignities done them (v. 19-24).
- VII.** The miraculous conversion of the jailer to the faith of Christ (v. 25-34).
- VIII.** The honourable discharge of Paul and Silas by the magistrates (v. 35-40).

~~441~~ ACTS 16:1-5

PAUL'S ADOPTION OF TIMOTHY

Paul was a spiritual father, and as such a one we have him here adopting Timothy, and taking care of the education of many others who had been begotten to Christ by his ministry: and in all he appears to have been a wise and tender father. Here is,

I. His taking Timothy into his acquaintance and under his tuition. One thing designed in the book of the Acts is to help us to understand Paul's epistles, two of which are directed to Timothy; it was therefore necessary that in the history of Paul we should have some account concerning him. And we are here accordingly told,

1. That he was a disciple, one that belonged to Christ, and was baptized, probably in his infancy, when his mother became a believer, as Lydia's household was baptized upon her believing, v. 15. Him, that was a disciple of Christ, Paul took to be his disciple, that he might further train him up in the knowledge and faith of Christ; he took him to be brought up for Christ.

2. That his mother was a Jewess originally, *but believed in Christ*; her name was *Eunice*, his grandmother's name was *Lois*. Paul speaks of them both with great respect, as women of eminent virtue and piety, and commends them especially for their unfeigned faith (~~ROM~~ 2 Timothy 1:5), their sincerely embracing and adhering to the doctrine of Christ.

3. That his father was a Greek, a Gentile. The marriage of a Jewish woman to a Gentile husband (though some would make a difference) was prohibited as much as the marriage of a Jewish man to a Gentile wife, ~~ROM~~ Deuteronomy 7:3. Thou shalt no more *give thy daughter to his son than take his daughter to thy son*; yet this seems to have been limited to the nations that lived among them in Canaan, whom they were most in danger of infection from. Now because his father was a Greek he was not circumcised: for the entail of the covenant and the seal of it, as of other entails in that nation, went by the father, not by the mother; so that his father being no Jew he was not obliged to circumcision, nor entitled to it, unless when he grew up he did himself desire it. But, observe, though his mother could not prevail to have him circumcised in his infancy, because his father was of another mind and way, yet she educated him in the fear of God, that though he wanted the sign of the covenant he might not want the thing signified.

4. That he had gained a very good character among the Christians: he was *well reported of by the brethren* that were at Lystra and Iconium; he had not only an unblemished reputation, and was free from scandal, but he had a bright reputation, and great encomiums were given of him, as an extraordinary young man, and one from whom great things were expected. Not only those in the place where he was born, but those in the

neighbouring cities, admired him, and spoke honourably of him. He had a name for good things with good people.

5. That Paul would have him *to go forth with him*, to accompany him, to give attendance on him, to receive instruction from him, and to join with him in the work of the gospel — to preach for him when there was occasion, and to be left behind in places where he had planted churches. Paul had a great love for him, not only because he was an ingenious young man, and one of great parts, but because he was a serious young man, and one of devout affections: for Paul was always *mindful of his tears*, ^{<5004>}2 Timothy 1:4.

6. That Paul took him and circumcised him, or ordered it to be done. This was strange. Had not Paul opposed those with all his might that were for imposing circumcision upon the Gentile converts? Had he not at this time the decrees of the council at Jerusalem with him, which witnessed against it? He had, and yet circumcised Timothy, not, as those teachers designed in imposing circumcision, to oblige him to keep the ceremonial law, but only to render his conversation and ministry passable, and, if it might be, acceptable among the Jews that abounded in those quarters. He knew Timothy was a man likely to do a great deal of good among them, being admirably qualified for the ministry, if they were not invincibly prejudiced against him; and therefore, that they might not shun him as one unclean, because uncircumcised, he took him and *circumcised him*. Thus *to the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, and all things to all men, that he might gain some*. He was against those who made circumcision necessary to salvation, but used it himself when it was conducive to edification; nor was he rigid in opposing it, as they were in imposing it. Thus, though he went not in this instance according to the letter of the decree, he went according to the spirit of it, which was a spirit of tenderness towards the Jews, and willingness to bring them off gradually from their prejudices. Paul made no difficulty of taking Timothy to be his companion, though he was uncircumcised; but the Jews would not hear him if he were, and therefore Paul will humour them herein. It is probable that it was at this time that Paul laid his hands on Timothy, for the conferring of the gift of the Holy Ghost upon him, ^{<5006>}2 Timothy 1:6.

II. His confirming the churches which he had planted (v. 4, 5): *He went through the cities* where he had *preached the word of the Lord*, as he intended (^{<4156>}Acts 15:36), to enquire into their state. And we are told,

1. That they delivered them copies of the decrees of the Jerusalem synod, to be a direction to them in the government of themselves, and that they might have wherewith to answer the judaizing teachers, and to justify themselves in adhering to the *liberty with which Christ had made them free*. All the churches were concerned in that decree, and therefore it was requisite they should all have it well attested. Though Paul had for a particular reason circumcised Timothy, yet he would not have that drawn into a precedent; and therefore he *delivered the decrees* to the churches, to be religiously observed; for they must abide by the rule, and not be drawn from it by a particular example.

2. That this was of very good service to them.

(1.) The churches were hereby *established in the faith*, v. 5. They were confirmed particularly in their opinion against the imposing of the ceremonial law upon the Gentiles; the great assurance and heat wherewith the judaizing teachers pressed the necessity of circumcision, and the plausible arguments they produced for it, had shocked them, so that they began to waver concerning it. But when they saw the testimony, not only of the apostles and elders, but of the Holy Ghost in them, against it, they were established, and did not longer waver about it. Note, Testimonies to truth, though they may not prevail to convince those that oppose it, may be of very good use to establish those that are in doubt concerning it, and to fix them. Nay, the design of this decree being to set aside the ceremonial law, and the carnal ordinances of that, they were by it established in the Christian faith in general, and were the more firmly assured that it was of God, because it set up a spiritual way of serving God, as more suited to the nature both of God and man; and, besides, that spirit of tenderness and condescension which appeared in these letters plainly showed that the apostles and elders were herein under the guidance of him who is love itself.

(2.) They *increased in number daily*. The imposing of the yoke of the ceremonial law upon their converts was enough to frighten people from them. If they had been disposed to turn Jews, they could have done that long since, before the apostles came among them; but, if they cannot be interested in the Christian privileges without submitting to the Jews' yoke, they will be as they are. But, if they find there is no danger of their being so enslaved, they are ready to embrace Christianity, and join themselves to the church. And thus the church *increased in numbers daily*; not a day

passed but some or other gave up their names to Christ. And it is a joy to those who heartily wish well to the honour of Christ, and the welfare of the church and the souls of men, to see such an increase.

ACTS 16:6-15

PAUL INVITED INTO MACEDONIA

In these verses we have,

I. Paul's travels up and down to do good.

1. He and Silas his colleague went throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, where, it should seem, the gospel was already planted, but whether by Paul's hand or no is not mentioned; it is likely it was, for in his epistle to the Galatians he speaks of his *preaching the gospel to them at the first*, and how very acceptable he was among them, ~~4:13~~ Galatians 4:13-15. And it appears by that epistle that the judaizing teachers had then done a great deal of mischief to these churches of Galatia, had prejudiced them against Paul and drawn them from the gospel of Christ, for which he there severely reproves them. But probably that was a great while after this.

2. They were forbidden at this time to preach the gospel in Asia (the country properly so called), because it did not need, other hands being at work there; or because the people were not yet prepared to receive it, as they were afterwards (~~19:10~~ Acts 19:10), when *all those that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord*; or, as Dr. Lightfoot suggests, because at this time Christ would employ Paul in a piece of new work, which was to preach the gospel to a Roman colony at Philippi, for hitherto the Gentiles to whom he had preached were Greeks. The Romans were more particularly hated by the Jews than other Gentiles; their armies were the *abomination of desolation*; and therefore there is this among other things extraordinary in his call thither that he is forbidden to preach the gospel in Asia and other places, in order to his preaching it there, which is an intimation that the light of the gospel would in aftertimes be directed more westward than eastward. It was the Holy Ghost that forbade them, either by secret whispers in the minds of both of them, which, when they came to compare notes, they found to be the same, and to come from the same Spirit; or by some prophets who spoke to them from the Spirit. The

removals of ministers, and the dispensing of the means of grace by them, are in a particular manner under a divine guidance and direction. We find an Old-Testament minister forbidden to preach at all (^{<BIB>}Ezekiel 3:26): *Thou shalt be dumb*. But these New-Testament ministers are only forbidden to preach in one place, while they are directed to another where there is more need.

3. They would have gone into Bithynia, but were not permitted: *the Spirit suffered them not*, v. 7. They came to Mysia, and, as it should seem, preached the gospel there; for though it was a very mean contemptible country, even to a proverb (*Mysorum ultimus*, in Cicero, is *a most despicable man*), yet the apostles disdained not to visit it, owning themselves debtors both *to the wise and to the unwise*, ^{<BIB>}Romans 1:14. In Bithynia was the city of Nice, where the first general council was held against the Arians; into these countries Peter sent his epistle (^{<BIB>}1 Peter 1:1); and there were flourishing churches here, for, though they had not the gospel sent them now, they had it in their turn, not long after. Observe, Though their judgment and inclination were to go into Bithynia, yet, having then extraordinary ways of knowing the mind of God, they were overruled by them, contrary to their own mind. We must now follow providence, and submit to the guidance of that pillar of cloud and fire; and, if this *suffer us not* to do what we assay to do, we ought to acquiesce, and believe it for the best. *The Spirit of Jesus* suffered them not; so many ancient copies read it. The servants of the Lord Jesus ought to be always under the check and conduct of the *Spirit of the Lord Jesus*, by whom he governs men's minds.

4. They *passed by Mysia*, or passed *through it* (so some), sowing good seed, we may suppose, as they went along; and they came down to Troas, the city of Troy, so much talked of, or the country thereabouts, which took its denomination from it. Here a church was planted; for here we find one in being, ^{<BIB>}Acts 20:6, 7, and probably planted at this time, and in a little time. It should seem that at Troas Luke fell in with Paul, and joined himself to his company; for henceforward, for the most part, when he speaks of Paul's journeys, he puts himself into the number of his retinue, *we went*, v. 10.

II. Paul's particular call to Macedonia, that is, to Philippi, the chief city, inhabited mostly by Romans, as appears, v. 21. Here we have,

1. The vision Paul had, v. 9. Paul had many visions, sometimes to encourage, sometimes, as here, to direct him in his work. An angel appeared to him, to intimate to him that it was the will of Christ he should go to Macedonia. Let him not be discouraged by the embargo laid upon him once and again, by which his designs were crossed; for, though he shall not go where he has a mind to go, he shall go where God has work for him to do. Now observe,

(1.) The person Paul saw. There stood by him *a man of Macedonia*, who by his habit or dialect seemed so to Paul, or who told him he was so. The angel, some think, assumed the shape of such a man; or, as others think, impressed upon Paul's fancy, when between asleep and awake, the image of such a man: he dreamt he saw such a one. Christ would have Paul directed to Macedonia, not as the apostles were at other times, by a messenger from heaven, to send him thither, but by a messenger thence to call him thither, because in this way he would afterwards ordinarily direct the motions of his ministers, by inclining the hearts of those who needed them to invite them. Paul shall be called to Macedonia by a man of Macedonia, and by him speaking in the name of the rest. Some make this man to be the tutelar angel of Macedonia, supposing angels to have charge of particular places as well as persons, and that so much is intimated ²⁷⁰Daniel 10:20, where we read of the *princes of Persia and Grecia*, that seem to have been angels. But there is no certainty of this. There was presented either to Paul's eyes or to his mind a man of Macedonia. The angel must not preach the gospel himself to the Macedonians, but must bring Paul to them. Nor must he by the authority of an angel order him to go, but in the person of a Macedonian court him to come. A man of Macedonia, not a magistrate of the country, much less a priest (Paul was not accustomed to receive invitations from such) but an ordinary inhabitant of that country, a plain man, that carried in his countenance marks of probity and seriousness, that did not come to banter Paul nor trifle with him, but in good earnest and with all earnestness to importune his assistance.

(2.) The invitation given him. This honest Macedonian *prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us*; that is, "Come and preach the gospel to us; let us have the benefit of thy labours."

[1.] "*Thou hast helped many*; we have heard of those in this and the other country to whom thou hast been very useful; and why may we not put in

for a share? O come and help us.” The benefits others have received from the gospel should quicken our enquiries, our further enquiries, after it.

[2.] “It is thy business, and it is thy delight, to help poor souls; thou art a physician for the sick, that art to be ready at the call of every patient; O come and help us.”

[3.] “We have need of thy help, as much as any people; we in Macedonia are as ignorant and as careless in religion as any people in the world are, are as idolatrous and as vicious as any, and as ingenious and industrious to ruin ourselves as any; and therefore, O come, come with all speed among us. *If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.*”

[4.] “Those few among us that have any sense of divine things, and any concern for their own souls and the souls of others, have done what can be done, by the help of natural light; I have done my part for one. We have carried the matter as far as it will go, to persuade our neighbours to fear and worship God, but we can do little good among them. *O come come, thou over, and help us.* The gospel thou preachest has arguments and powers beyond those we have yet been furnished with.”

[5.] “Do not only help us with thy prayers here: this will not do; thou must come over and help us.” Note, People have great need of help for their souls, and it is their duty to look out for it and invite those among them that can help them.

2. The interpretation made of the vision (v. 10): They *gathered assuredly from this that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel* there; and they were ready to go wherever God directed. Note, We may sometimes infer a call of God from a call of man. If a man of Macedonia says, *Come and help us*, Paul thence gathers assuredly that God says, *Go and help them*. Ministers may go on with great cheerfulness and courage in their work when they perceive Christ calling them, not only to preach the gospel, but to preach it at this time, in this place, to this people.

III. Paul's voyage to Macedonia hereupon: He *was not disobedient to the heavenly vision*, but followed this divine direction much more cheerfully, and with more satisfaction, than he would have followed any contrivance or inclination of his own.

1. Thitherward he turned his thoughts. Now that he knows the mind of God in the matter he is determined, for this is all he wanted; now he thinks

no more of Asia, nor Bithynia, but *immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia*. Paul only had the vision, but he communicated it to his companions, and they all, upon the credit of this, resolved for Macedonia. As Paul will follow Christ, so all his will follow him, or rather follow Christ with him. They are getting things in readiness for this expedition immediately, without delay. Note, God's calls must be complied with immediately. As our obedience must not be disputed, so it must not be deferred; do it to-day, lest thy heart be hardened. Observe, They could not immediately go into Macedonia; but they immediately endeavoured to go. If we cannot be so quick as we would be in our performances, yet we may be in our endeavours, and this shall be accepted.

2. Thitherward he steered his course. They *set sail* by the first shipping and with the first fair wind *from Troas*; for they may be sure they have done what they had to do there when God calls them to another place. They *came with a straight course*, a prosperous voyage, *to Samothracia*; the *next day they came to Neapolis*, a city on the confines of Thrace and Macedonia; and at last they landed at *Philippi*, a city so called from Philip king of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great; it is said (v. 12) to be,

(1.) *The chief city of that part of Macedonia*; or, as some read it, *the first city*, the first they came to when they came from Troas. As an army that lands in a country of which they design to make themselves masters begin with the reduction of the first place they come to, so did Paul and his assistants: they began with the first city, because, if the gospel were received there, it would the more easily spread thence all the country over.

(2.) It was a colony. The Romans not only had a garrison, but the inhabitants of the city were Romans, the magistrates at least, and the governing part. There were the greatest numbers and variety of people, and therefore the most likelihood of doing good.

IV. The cold entertainment which Paul and his companions met with at Philippi. One would have expected that having such a particular call from God thither they would have had a joyful welcome there, as Peter had with Cornelius when the angel sent him thither. Where was the man of Macedonia that begged Paul to come thither with all speed? Why did not he stir up his countrymen, some of them at least, to go and meet him? Why was not Paul introduced with solemnity, and the keys of the city put into his hand? Here is nothing like this; for,

1. It is a good while before any notice at all is taken of him: *We were in that city abiding certain days*, probably at a public house and at their own charge, for they had no friend to invite them so much as to a meal's meat, till Lydia welcomed them. They had made all the haste they could thither, but, now that they are there, they are almost tempted to think they might as well have staid where they were. But so it was ordered for their trial whether they could bear the pain of silence and lying by, when this was their lot. Those eminent and useful men are not fit to live in this world that know not how to be slighted and overlooked. Let not ministers think it strange if they be first strongly invited to a place, and then looked shyly upon when they come.

2. When they have an opportunity of preaching it is in an obscure place, and to a mean and small auditory, v. 13. There was no synagogue of the Jews there, for aught that appears, to be a door of entrance to them, and they never went to the idol-temples of the Gentiles, to preach to the auditories there; but here, upon enquiry, they found out a little meeting of good women, *that were proselytes of the gate*, who would be thankful to them if they would give them a sermon. The place of this meeting is out of the city; there it was connived at, but would not be suffered any where within the walls. It was a place *where prayer was wont to be made*; *proseuche* — *where an oratory or house of prayer was* (so some), a chapel, or smaller synagogue. But I rather take it, as we read it, where prayer was appointed or accustomed to be. Those that worshipped the true God, and would not worship idols, met there to pray together, and, according to the description of the most ancient and universal devotion, *to call upon the name of the Lord*. Each of them prayed apart every day; this was always the practice of those that worshipped God: but, besides this, *they came together on the sabbath day*. Though they were but a few and discountenanced by the town, though their meeting was at some distance, though, for aught that appears, there were none but women, yet a solemn assembly the worshippers of God must have, if by any means it be possible, on the sabbath day. When we cannot do as we would we must do as we can; if we have not synagogues, we must be thankful for more private places, and resort to them, *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*, according as our opportunities are. This place is said to be *by a river side*, which perhaps was chosen, as befriending contemplation. Idolaters are said *to take their lot among the smooth stones of the stream*, ²⁵⁰⁶ Isaiah 57:6. But these proselytes had in their eye,

perhaps, the example of those prophets who had their visions, one by the *river of Chebar* (³⁰⁰Ezekiel 1:1), another by *the great river Hiddekel*, ^{270B}Daniel 10:4. Thither Paul and Silas and Luke went, and *sat down*, to instruct the congregation, that they might the better pray with them. They *spoke unto the women who resorted thither*, encouraged them in practising according to the light they had, and led them on further to the knowledge of Christ.

V. The conversion of *Lydia*, who probably was the first that was wrought upon there to believe in Christ, though not the last. In this story of *the Acts*, we have not only the conversion of places recorded, but of many particular persons; for such is the worth of souls that the reducing of one to God is a great matter. Nor have we only the conversions that were effected by miracle, as Paul's, but some that were brought about by the ordinary methods of grace, as Lydia's here. Observe,

1. Who this convert was that there is such particular notice taken of. Four things are recorded of her: —

(1.) Her name, *Lydia*. It is an honour to her to have her name recorded here in the book of God, so that *wherever the scriptures are read there shall this be told concerning her*. Note, The names of the saints are precious with God, and should be so with us; we cannot have our names recorded in the Bible, but, if God open our hearts, we shall find them *written in the book of life*, and this is better (^{300B}Philippians 4:3) and more to *be rejoiced in*, ^{410B}Luke 10:20.

(2.) Her calling. She was *a seller of purple*, either of purple dye or of purple cloth or silk. Observe,

[1.] She had a calling, an honest calling, which the historian takes notice of to her praise; she was none of those women that the apostle speaks of (^{510B}1 Timothy 5:13), *who learn to be idle, and not only idle, etc.*

[2.] It was a mean calling. She was *a seller of purple*, not a wearer of purple, few such are called. The notice here taken of this is an intimation to those who are employed in honest callings, if they be honest in the management of them, not to be ashamed of them.

[3.] Though she had a calling to mind, yet she was a worshipper of God, and found time to improve advantages for her soul. The business of our particular callings may be made to consist very well with the business of

religion, and therefore it will not excuse us from religious exercises alone, and in our families, or in solemn assemblies, to say, We have shops to look after, and a trade to mind; for have we not also a God to serve and a soul to look after? Religion does not call us from our business in the world, but directs us in it. Every thing in its time and place.

(3.) The place she was of — *of the city of Thyatira*, which was a great way from Philippi; there she was born and bred, but either married at Philippi, or brought by her trade to settle there. The providence of God, as it always appoints, so it often removes, *the bounds of our habitation*, and sometimes makes the change of our outward condition or place of our abode wonderfully subservient to the designs of his grace concerning our salvation. Providence brings Lydia to Philippi, to be under Paul's ministry, and there, where she met with it, she made a good use of it; so should we improve opportunities.

(4.) Her religion before the Lord opened her heart.

[1.] She worshipped God according to the knowledge she had; she was one of the devout women. Sometimes the grace of God wrought upon those who, before their conversion, were very wicked and vile, publicans and harlots; *such were some of you*, ~~and~~ 1 Corinthians 6:11. But sometimes it fastened upon those who were of a good character, who had some good in them, as the eunuch, Cornelius, and Lydia. Note, It is not enough to be worshippers of God, but we must be believers in Jesus Christ, for there is no coming to God as a Father, but by him as Mediator. But those who worshipped God according to the light they had stood fair for the discoveries of Christ, and his grace to them; for *to him that has shall be given*: and to them Christ would be welcome; for those that know what it is to worship God see their need of Christ, and know what use to make of his mediation.

[2.] She heard the apostles. Here, where prayer was made, when there was an opportunity, *the word was preached*; for hearing the word of God is a part of religious worship, and how can we expect God should hear our prayers if we will not hearken to his word? Those that worshipped God according to the light they had looked out for further light; we must improve *the day of small things*, but must not rest in it.

2. What the work was that was wrought upon her: *Whose heart the Lord opened*. Observe here,

(1.) The author of this work: it was *the Lord*, — the Lord Christ, to whom this judgment is committed, — the Spirit of the Lord, who is the sanctifier. Note, Conversion-work is God's work; it is he *that works in us both to will and to do*; not as if we had nothing to do, but of ourselves, without God's grace, we can do nothing; nor as if God were in the least chargeable with the ruin of those that perish, but the salvation of those that are saved must be wholly ascribed to him.

(2.) The seat of this work; it is in the heart that the change is made, it is to the heart that this blessed turn is given; it was the heart of Lydia that was wrought upon. Conversion-work is heart-work; it is a *renewing of the heart, the inward man, the spirit of the mind*.

(3.) The nature of the work; she had not only her heart touched, but her heart opened. An unconverted soul is shut up, and fortified against Christ, *straitly shut up*, as Jericho against Joshua, ^(~~REB~~)Joshua 6:1. Christ, in dealing with the soul, knocks at the door that is shut against him (^(~~REB~~)Revelation 3:20); and, when a sinner is effectually persuaded to embrace Christ, *then the heart is opened for the King of glory to come in* — the understanding is open to receive the divine light, the will opened to receive the divine law, and the affections opened to receive the divine love. When the heart is thus opened to Christ, the ear is opened to his word, the lips opened in prayer, the hand opened in charity, and the steps enlarged in all manner of gospel obedience.

3. What were the effects of this work on the heart.

(1.) She took great notice of the word of God. Her heart was so *opened that she attended to the things that were spoken by Paul*; she not only gave attendance on Paul's preaching, but gave attention to it; *she applied to herself* (so some read it) *the things that were spoken by Paul*; and then only the word does us good, and makes an abiding impression upon us, when we apply it to ourselves. Now this was an evidence of the opening of her heart, and was the fruit of it; wherever the heart is opened by the grace of God, it will appear by a diligent attendance on, and attention to, the word of God, both for Christ's sake, whose word it is, and for our own sakes, who are so nearly interested in it.

(2.) She gave up her name to Jesus Christ, and took upon her the profession of his holy religion; *She was baptized*, and by this solemn rite was admitted a member of the church of Christ; and with her *her*

household also was baptized, those of them that were infants in her right, for if *the root be holy so are the branches*, and those that were grown up by her influence and authority. She and her household were baptized by the same rule that Abraham and his household were circumcised, because the seal of the covenant belongs to the covenanters and their seed.

(3.) She was very kind to the ministers, and very desirous to be further instructed by them in *the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*: She besought us saying “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, if you take me to be a sincere Christian, manifest your confidence in me by this, *come into my house, and abide there.*” Thus she desired an opportunity,

[1.] To testify her gratitude to those who had been the instruments of divine grace in this blessed change that was wrought upon her. When her heart was open to Christ, her house was open to his ministers for his sake, and they were welcome to the best entertainment she had, which she did not think too good for those of whose spiritual things she had reaped so plentifully. Nay, they are not only welcome to her house, but she is extremely pressing and importunate with them: *She constrained us*; which intimates that Paul was very backward and unwilling to go, because he was afraid of being burdensome to the families of the young converts, and would study to make the gospel of Christ without charge (~~408~~ 1 Corinthians 9:18; ~~408~~ Acts 20:34), that those who were without might have no occasion given them to reproach the preachers of the gospel as designing, self-seeking men, and that those who were within might have no occasion to complain of the expenses of their religion: but Lydia will have no nay; she will not believe that they take her to be a sincere Christian unless they will oblige her herein; like Abraham inviting the angels (~~408~~ Genesis 18:3), *If now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away from thy servant.*

[2.] She desired an opportunity of receiving further instruction. If she might but have them for awhile in her family, she might hear them daily (~~408~~ Proverbs 8:34), and not merely on sabbath days at the meeting. In her own house she might not only hear them, but ask them questions; and she might have them to pray with her daily, and to bless her household. Those that know something of Christ cannot but desire to know more, and seek opportunities of increasing their acquaintance with his gospel.

4136 ACTS 16:16-24

THE EXPULSION OF AN EVIL SPIRIT

Paul and his companions, though they were for some time buried in obscurity at Philippi, yet now begin to be taken notice of.

I. *A damsel that had a spirit of divination* caused them to be taken notice of, by proclaiming them to be the servants of God. Observe,

1. The account that is given of this damsel: She was *pythonissa*, possessed with such a *spirit of divination* as that damsel was by whom the oracles of Apollo at Delphos were delivered; she was actuated by an evil spirit, that dictated ambiguous answers to those who consulted her, which served to gratify their vain desire of knowing things to come, but often deceived them. In those times of ignorance, infidelity, and idolatry, the devil, by the divine permission, thus led men captive at his will; and he could not have gained such adoration from them as he had, if he had not pretended to give oracles to them, for by both his usurpation is maintained as the god of this world. This damsel *brought her masters much gain by soothsaying*; many came to consult this witch for the discovery of robberies, the finding of things lost, and especially to be told their fortune, and none came but with the rewards of divination in their hands, according to the quality of the person and the importance of the case. Probably there were many that were thus kept for fortune-tellers, but, it should seem, this was more in repute than any of them; for, while others brought some gain, this *brought much gain to her masters*, being consulted more than any other.

2. The testimony which this damsel gave to Paul and his companions: She *met them* in the street, as they were going to prayer, to the house of prayer, or rather to the work of prayer there, v. 16. They went thither publicly, every body knew whither they were going, and what they were going to do. If what she did was likely to be any distraction to them, or a hindrance in their work, it is observable how subtle Satan is, that great tempter, in taking the opportunity to give us diversion when we are going about any religious exercises, to ruffle us and to put us out of temper when we need to be most composed. When she met with them she followed them, crying, “*These men*, how contemptible soever they look and are looked upon, are great men, for they *are the servants of the most high God*, and men that

should be very welcome to us, for *they show unto us the way of salvation*, both the salvation that will be our happiness, and the way to it that will be our holiness.”

Now,

(1.) This witness is true; it is a comprehensive encomium on the faithful preachers of the gospel, and makes their feet beautiful, ~~4015~~ Romans 10:15. Though they are *men subject to like passions as we are*, and *earthen vessels*, yet,

[1.] “They are *the servants of the most high God*; they attend on him, are employed by him, and are devoted to his honour, as servants; they come to us on his errands, the message they bring is from him, and they serve the purposes and interest of his kingdom. The gods we Gentiles worship are inferior beings, therefore not gods, but these men belong to the supreme *Numen, to the most high God*, who is over all men, over all gods, who made us all, and to whom we are all accountable. They are his servants, and therefore it is our duty to respect them, and harken to them for their Master's sake, and it is at our peril if we affront them.”

[2.] “They *show unto us the way of salvation*.” Even the heathen had some notion of the miserable deplorable state of mankind, and their need of salvation, and it was what they made some enquiries after. “Now,” saith she, “these men are the men that show us what we have in vain sought for in our superstitious profitless application to our priests and oracles.” Note, God has, in the gospel of his Son, plainly shown us the way of salvation, has told us what we must do that we may be delivered from the misery to which by sin we have exposed ourselves.

But,

(2.) How came this testimony from the mouth of one that had a spirit of divination? Is Satan divided against himself? Will he cry up those whose business it is to pull him down? We may take it either,

[1.] As extorted from this spirit of divination for the honour of the gospel by the power of God; as the devil was forced to say of Christ (~~4024~~ Mark 1:24): *I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God*. The truth is sometimes magnified by the confession of its adversaries, in which they are witnesses against themselves. Christ would have this testimony of the damsel to rise up in judgment against those at Philippi who slighted and

persecuted the apostles; though the gospel needed no such testimony, yet it shall serve to add to their commendation that the damsel whom they looked upon as an oracle in other things proclaimed the apostles God's servants. Or,

[2.] As designed by the evil spirit, that subtle serpent, to the dishonour of the gospel; some think she designed hereby to gain credit to herself and her prophecies, and so to increase her master's profit by pretending to be in the interest of the apostles, who, she thought, had a growing reputation, or to curry favour with Paul, that he might not separate her and her familiar. Others think that Satan, who can transform himself into an angel of light, and can say anything to serve a turn, designed hereby to disgrace the apostles; as if these divines were of the same fraternity with their diviners, because they were witnessed to by them, and then the people might as well adhere to those they had been used to. Those that were most likely to receive the apostles' doctrine were such as were prejudiced against these spirits of divination, and therefore would, by this testimony, be prejudiced against the gospel; and, as for those who regarded these diviners, the devil thought himself sure of them.

II. Christ caused them to be taken notice of, by giving them power to cast the devil out of this damsel. She continued *many days* clamouring thus (v. 18); and, it should seem, Paul took no notice of her, not knowing but it might be ordered of God for the service of his cause, that she should thus witness concerning his ministers; but finding perhaps that it did them a prejudice, rather than any service, he soon silenced her, by casting the devil out of her.

1. He was *grieved*. It troubled him to see the damsel made an instrument of Satan to deceive people, and to see the people imposed upon by her divinations. It was a disturbance to him to hear a sacred truth so profaned, and good words come out of such a wicked mouth with such and evil design. Perhaps they were spoken in an ironical bantering way, as ridiculing the apostles' pretensions, and mocking them, as when Christ's persecutors complimented him with *Hail, king of the Jews*; and then justly might Paul be grieved, as any good man's heart would be, to hear any good truth of God bawled out in the streets in a canting jeering way.

2. He *commanded the evil spirit to come out of her*. He turned with a holy indignation, angry both at the flatteries and at the reproaches of *the*

unclean spirit, and said, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her; and by this he will show that these men are the servants of the living God, and are able to prove themselves so, without her testimony: her silence shall demonstrate it more than her speaking could do. Thus Paul shows the way of salvation indeed, that it is by breaking the power of Satan, and chaining him up, that he may not deceive the world (~~418~~ Revelation 20:3), and that this salvation is to be obtained *in the name of Jesus Christ* only, as in his name the devil was now cast out and by no other. It was a great blessing to the country when Christ by a word cast the devil out of those in whom he frightened people and molested them *so that no man might pass by that way* (~~408~~ Matthew 8:28); but it was a much greater kindness to the country when Paul now, in Christ's name, cast the devil out of one who deceived people and imposed upon their credulity. Power went along with the word of Christ, before which Satan could not stand, but was forced to quit his hold, and in this case it was a strong hold: *He came out the same hour.*

III. The masters of the damsel that was dispossessed caused them to be taken notice of, by bringing them before the magistrates for doing it, and laying it to their charge as their crime. The preachers of the gospel would never have had an opportunity of speaking to the magistrates if they had not been brought before them as evil doers. Observe here,

1. That which provoked them was, that, the damsel being restored to herself, *her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone*, v. 19. See here what evil *the love of money is the root of!* If the preaching of the gospel ruin the craft of the silversmiths (~~442~~ Acts 19:24), much more the craft of the soothsayers; and therefore here is a great outcry raised, when Satan's power to deceive is broken: the priests hated the gospel because it turned men from the blind service of dumb idols, and so the hope of their gains was gone. The power of Christ, which appeared in dispossessing the woman, and the great kindness done to her in delivering her out of Satan's hand, made no impression upon them when they apprehended that they should hereby lose money.

2. The course they took with them was to incense the higher powers against them, as men fit to be punished: *They caught them* as they went along, and, with the utmost fury and violence, *dragged them into the marketplace*, where public justice was administered.

(1.) They brought them *to the rulers*, their justices of peace, to do by them as men taken into the hands of the law, the *duumviri*.

(2.) From them they hurried them *to the magistrates*, the praetors or governors of the city, *tois strategois* — *the officers of the army*, so the word signifies; but it is taken in general for the judges or chief rulers: to them they brought their complaint.

3. The charge they exhibited against them was that they were the troublers of the land, v. 20. They take it for granted that these men are Jews, a nation at this time as much an *abomination to the Romans* as they had long ago been to the Egyptians. Piteous was the case of the apostles, when it was turned to their reproach that they were Jews, and yet the Jews were their most violent persecutors!

(1.) The general charge against them is *that they troubled the city*, sowed discord, and disturbed the public peace, and occasioned riots and tumults, than which nothing could be more false and unjust, as was Ahab's character of Elijah (~~1~~1 Kings 18:17): *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?* If they troubled the city, it was but like the angel's troubling the water of Bethesda's pool, in order to healing — shaking, in order to a happy settlement. Thus those that rouse the sluggards are exclaimed against for troubling them.

(2.) The proof of this charge is their teaching customs not proper to be admitted by a Roman colony, v. 21. The Romans were always very jealous of innovations in religion. Right or wrong, they would adhere to that, how vain soever, which they had received by tradition from their fathers. No foreign nor upstart deity must be allowed, without the approbation of the senate; the gods of their country must be their gods, true or false. This was one of the laws of the twelve tables. *Hath a nation changed their gods?* It incensed them against the apostles that they taught a religion destructive of polytheism and idolatry, and preached to them to turn from those vanities. This the Romans could not bear: “If this grow upon us, in a little while we shall lose our religion.”

IV. The magistrates, by their proceedings against them, caused them to be taken notice of.

1. By countenancing the persecution they raised the mob upon them (v. 22): *The multitude rose up together against them*, and were ready to pull

them to pieces. It has been the artifice of Satan to make God's ministers and people odious to the commonalty, by representing them as dangerous men, who aimed at the destruction of the constitution and the changing of the customs, when really there has been no ground for such an imputation.

2. By going on to an execution they further represented them as the vilest malefactors: *They rent off their clothes*, with rage and fury, not having patience till they were taken off, in order to their being scourged. This the apostle refers to when he speaks of *their being treated at Philippi*, <sup>¹ Thessalonians 2:2. The magistrates commanded that they should be whipped as vagabonds, by the lictors or beadles who attended the praetors, and carried rods with them for that purpose; this was one of those three times that Paul was beaten with rods, according to the Roman usage, which was not under the compassionate limitation of the number of stripes not to exceed forty, which was provided by the Jewish law. It is here said that *they laid many stripes upon them* (v. 23), without counting how many, because they seemed vile unto them, <sup>² Deuteronomy 25:3. Now, one would think, this might have satiated their cruelty; if they must be whipped, surely they must be discharged. No, they are imprisoned, and it is probable the present purpose was to try them for their lives, and put them to death; else why should there be such care taken to prevent their escape?

(1.) The judges made their commitment very strict: They *charged the jailer to keep them safely*, and have a very watchful eye upon them, as if they were dangerous men, that either would venture to break prison themselves or were in confederacy with those that would attempt to rescue them. Thus they endeavoured to render them odious, that they might justify themselves in the base usage they had given them.

(2.) The jailer made their confinement very severe (v. 24): *Having received such a charge*, though he might have kept them safely enough in the outer prison, yet *he thrust them into the inner prison*. He was sensible that the magistrates had a great indignation against these men, and were inclined to be severe with them, and therefore he thought to ingratiate himself with them, by exerting his power likewise against them to the uttermost. When magistrates are cruel, it is no wonder that the officers under them are so too. *He put them into the inner prison*, the dungeon, into which none were usually put but condemned malefactors, dark at noon-day, damp and cold, dirty, it is likely, and every way offensive, like that

into which Jeremiah was let down (^{<286>}Jeremiah 38:6); and, as if this were not enough, *he made their feet fast in the stocks*. Perhaps, having heard a report of the escape of *the preachers of the gospel out of prison, when the doors were fast barred* (^{<459>}Acts 5:19; 12:9), he thought he would be wiser than other jailers had been, and therefore would effectually secure them by fastening them in the stocks; and they were not the first of God's messengers that had their feet in the stocks; Jeremiah was so treated, and publicly too, in *the high-gate of Benjamin* (^{<200>}Jeremiah 20:2); Joseph had *his feet hurt with fetters*, (^{<458>}Psalms 105:18. Oh what hard usage have God's servants met with, as in the former days, so in the latter times! Witness the Book of Martyrs, martyrs in queen Mary's time.

^{<465>}ACTS 16:25-34

CONVERSION OF THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER

We have here the designs of the persecutors of Paul and Silas baffled and broken.

I. The persecutors designed to dishearten and discourage the preachers of the gospel, and to make them sick of the cause and weary of their work; but here we find them both hearty and heartened.

1. They were themselves hearty, wonderfully hearty; never were poor prisoners so truly cheerful, nor so far from laying their hard usage to heart. Let us consider what their case was. The praetors among the Romans had rods carried before them, and axes bound upon them, the *fasces and secures*. Now they had felt the smart of the rods, *the ploughers had ploughed upon their backs, and made long furrows*. The many stripes they had laid upon them were very sore, and one might have expected to hear them complaining of them, of the rawness and soreness of their backs and shoulders. Yet this was not all; they had reason to fear the axes next. Their master was first scourged and then crucified; and they might expect the same. In the mean time they were in the inner prison, their feet in the stocks, which, some think, not only held them, but hurt them; and yet, *at midnight*, when they should have been trying, if possible, to get a little rest, they *prayed and sang praises to God*.

(1.) They prayed together, prayed to God to support them and comfort them in their afflictions, to visit them, as he did Joseph in the prison, and to be with them, — prayed that their consolations in Christ might abound, as their afflictions for him did, — prayed that even their bonds and stripes might turn to the furtherance of the gospel, — prayed for their persecutors, that God would forgive them and turn their hearts. This was not at an hour of prayer, but at midnight; it was not in a house of prayer, but in a dungeon; yet it was seasonable to pray, and the prayer was acceptable. As in the dark, so out of the depths, we may cry unto God. No place, no time, amiss for prayer, if the heart be lifted up to God. Those that are companions in suffering should join in prayer. *Is any afflicted? Let him pray.* No trouble, how grievous soever, should indispose us for prayer.

(2.) *They sang praises to God.* They praised God; for we must *in every thing give thanks.* We never want matter for praise, if we do not want a heart. And what should put the heart of a child of God out of tune for this duty if a dungeon and a pair of stocks will not do it? They praised God that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, and that they were so wonderfully supported and borne up under their sufferings, and felt divine consolations so sweet, so strong, in their souls. Nay, *they not only praised God, but they sang praises to him,* in some psalm, or hymn, or spiritual song, either one of David's, or some modern composition, or one of their own, as *the Spirit gave them utterance.* As our rule is that the afflicted should pray, and therefore, being in affliction, they prayed; so our rule is that the merry should sing psalms (³¹⁸³James 5:13), and therefore, being merry in their affliction, *merry after a godly sort, they sang psalms.* This proves that the singing of psalms is a gospel ordinance, and ought to be used by all good Christians; and that it is instituted, not only for the expressing of their joys in a day of triumph, but for the balancing and relieving of their sorrows in a day of trouble. It was at midnight that they sang psalms, according to the example of the sweet psalmist of Israel (⁴¹⁸²Psalm 119:62): *At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto thee.*

(3.) Notice is here taken of the circumstance that *the prisoners heard them.* If the prisoners did not hear them pray, yet *they heard them sing praises.*

[1.] It intimates how hearty they were in singing praises to God; they sang so loud that, though they were in the dungeon, they were heard all the prison over; nay, so loud that they woke the prisoners: for we may suppose, being at midnight, they were all asleep. We should sing psalms

with all our heart. The saints are called upon to sing aloud upon their beds, ^{<495>}Psalm 149:5. But gospel grace carries the matter further, and gives us an example of those that sang aloud in the prison, in the stocks.

[2.] Though they knew the prisoners would hear them, yet they sang aloud, as those that were not ashamed of their Master, nor of his service. Shall those that would sing psalms in their families plead, in excuse for their omission of the duty, that they are afraid their neighbours should hear them, when those that sing profane songs roar them our, and care not who hears them?

[3.] The prisoners were made to hear the prison-songs of Paul and Silas, that they might be prepared for the miraculous favour shown to them all for the sake of Paul and Silas, when *the prison-doors were thrown open*. By this extraordinary comfort with which they were filled it was published that he whom they preached was *the consolation of Israel*. Let the prisoners that mean to oppose him hear and tremble before him; let those that are faithful to him hear and triumph, and take of the comfort that is spoken to the prisoners of hope, ^{<302>}Zechariah 9:12.

2. God heartened them wonderfully by his signal appearances for them, v. 26.

(1.) There was immediately a great earthquake; how far it extended we are not told, but it was such a violent shock in this place *that the very foundations of the prison were shaken*. While the prisoners were hearkening to the midnight devotions of Paul and Silas, and perhaps laughing at them and making a jest of them, this earthquake would strike a terror upon them, and convince them that those men were the favourites of Heaven, and such as God owned. We had *the house of prayer shaken*, in answer to prayer, and as a token of God's acceptance of it, ^{<408>}Acts 4:31. Here *the prison shaken*. The Lord was in these earthquakes, to show his resentment of the indignities done to his servants, to testify to those whose confidence is in the earth the weakness and instability of that which they confide, and to teach people *that, though the earth be moved, yet they need not fear*.

(2.) The prison-doors were thrown open, and the prisoners' fetters were knocked off: *Every man's bands were loosed*. Perhaps the prisoners, when they heard Paul and Silas pray and sing psalms, admired them, and spoke honourably of them, and said what the damsel had said of them, Surely,

these men are the servants of the living God. To recompense them for, and confirm them in, their good opinion of them, they share in the miracle, and have *their bands loosed*; as afterwards God gave to Paul all *those that were in the ship with him* (^{<4024>}Acts 27:24), so now he gave him all those that were in the prison with him. God hereby signified to these prisoners, as Grotius observes, that the apostles, in preaching the gospel, were public blessings to mankind, as they *proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison-doors to those that were bound*, ^{<2801>}Isaiah 61:1. *Et per eos solvi animorum vincula — and as by them the bonds of souls were unloosed.*

II. The persecutors designed to stop the progress of the gospel, that no more might embrace it; thus they hoped to ruin the meeting by the river side, that no more hearts should be opened there; but here we find converts made in the prison, that house turned into a meeting, the trophies of the gospel's victories erected there, and the jailer, their own servant, become a servant of Christ. It is probable that some of the prisoners, if not all, were converted; surely the miracle wrought on their bodies, in loosing their bands, was wrought on their souls too. See ^{<3818>}Job 36:8-10; ^{<3474>}Psalms 107:14, 15. But it is only the conversion of the jailer that is recorded.

1. He is afraid he shall lose his life, and Paul makes him easy as to this care, v. 27, 28.

(1.) He *awoke out of his sleep*. It is probable that the shock of the earthquake woke him, and the opening of the prison-doors, and the prisoners' expressions of joy and amazement, when in the dark they found their bands loosed, and called to tell one another what they felt: this was enough to awaken the jailer, whose place required that he should not be hard to wake. This waking him out of his sleep signified the awakening of his conscience out of its spiritual slumber. The call of the gospel is, *Awake, thou that sleepest* (^{<4054>}Ephesians 5:14), like that of Jonah, 1:6.

(2.) He saw the prison-doors open, and supposed, as well he might, that the prisoners had fled; and then what would become of him? He knew the Roman law in that case, and it was executed not long ago upon the keepers out of whose hands Peter escaped, ^{<4129>}Acts 12:19. It was according to that of the prophet, ^{<1173>}1 Kings 20:39, 42, *Keep this man; if he be missing, thy life shall go for his life*. The Roman lawyers after this, in their readings upon the law, *De custodia reorum — The custody of criminals* (which

appoints that the keeper should undergo the same punishment that should have been inflicted on the prisoner if he let him escape), take care to except an escape by miracle.

(3.) In his fright *he drew his sword*, and was going *to kill himself*, to prevent a more terrible death, and expected one, a pompous ignominious death, which he knew he was liable to for letting his prisoners escape and not looking better to them; and the extraordinarily strict charge which the magistrates gave him concerning Paul and Silas made him conclude they would be very severe upon him if they were gone. The philosophers generally allowed self-murder. Seneca prescribes it as the last remedy which those that are in distress may have recourse to. The Stoics, notwithstanding their pretended conquest of the passions, yielded thus far to them. And the Epicureans, who indulged the pleasures of sense, to avoid its pains chose rather to put an end to it. This jailer thought there was no harm in anticipating his own death; but Christianity proves itself to be of God by this, that it keeps us to the law of our creation — revives, enforces, and establishes it, obliges us to be just to our own lives, and teaches us cheerfully to resign them to our graces, but courageously to hold them out against our corruptions.

(4.) Paul stopped him from his proceeding against himself (v. 28): He *cried with a loud voice*, not only to make him hear, but to make him heed, *saying, Do not practise any evil to thyself; Do thyself no harm*. All the cautions of the word of God against sin, and all appearances of it and approaches to it, have this tendency, “*Do thyself no harm*. Man, woman, do not wrong thyself, nor ruin thyself; hurt not thyself, and then none else can hurt thee; do not sin, for nothing else can hurt thee.” Even as to the body, we are cautioned against those sins which do harm to it, and are taught *to hate our own flesh, but to nourish and cherish it*. The jailer needs not fear being called to an account for the escape of his prisoners, for *they are all here*. It was strange that some of them did not slip away, when the prison-doors were opened, and they were loosed from their bands; but their amazement held them fast, and, being sensible it was by the prayers of Paul and Silas that they were loosed, they would not stir unless they stirred; and God showed his power in binding their spirits, as much as in loosing their feet.

2. He is afraid he shall lose his soul, and Paul makes him easy as to this care too. One concern leads him to another, and a much greater; and, being

hindered from hastening himself out of this world, he begins to think, if he had pursued his intention, whither death would have brought him, and what would have become of him on the other side death — a very proper thought for such as have been snatched as a brand out of the fire, when there was but a step between them and death. Perhaps the heinousness of the sin he was running into helped to alarm him.

(1.) Whatever was the cause, he was put into a great consternation. The Spirit of God, that was sent to convince, in order to his being a Comforter, struck a terror upon him, and startled him. Whether he took care to shut the prison-doors again we are not told. Perhaps he forgot this as the woman of Samaria, when Christ had impressed convictions on her conscience, *left her water-pot* and forgot her errand to the well; for *he called for a light* with all speed, and *sprang in* to the inner prison, and *came trembling to Paul and Silas*. Those that have sin set in order before them, and are made to know their abominations, cannot but tremble at the apprehension of their misery and danger. This jailer, when he was thus made to tremble, could not apply to a more proper person than to Paul, for it had once been his own case; he had been once a persecutor of good men, as this jailer was — had cast them into prison, as he kept them — and when, like him, he was made sensible of it, *he trembled, and was astonished*; and therefore he was able to speak the more feelingly to the jailer.

(2.) In this consternation, he applied to Paul and Silas for relief. Observe,

[1.] How reverent and respectful his address to them is: *He called for a light*, because they were in the dark, and that they might see what a fright he was in; *he fell down before them*, as one amazed at the badness of his own condition, and ready to sink under the load of his terror because of it; he fell down before them, as one that had upon his spirit an awe of them, and of the image of God upon them, and of their commission from God. It is probable that he had heard what the damsel said of them, that they were *the servants of the living God, who showed to them the way of salvation*, and as such he thus expressed his veneration for them. He fell down before them, to beg their pardon, as a penitent, for the indignities he had done them, and to beg their advice, as a supplicant, what he should do. He gave them a title of respect, *Sirs, kyrioi* — *lords, masters*; just now it was, *Rogues and villains*, and he was their master; but now, *Sirs, lords*, and they are his masters. Converting grace changes people's language of and to

good people and good ministers; and, to such as are thoroughly convinced of sin, the very feet of those that bring tidings of Christ are beautiful; yea, though they are disgracefully fastened in the stocks.

[2.] How serious his enquiry is: *What must I do to be saved?* *First*, His salvation is now his great concern, and lies nearest his heart, which before was the furthest thing from his thoughts. Not, *What shall I do to be preferred, to be rich and great in the world?* but, *What shall I do to be saved?* *Secondly*, He does not enquire concerning others, what they must do; but concerning himself, “What must I do?” It is his own precious soul that he is in care about: “Let others do as they please; tell me what I must do, what course I must take.” *Thirdly*, He is convinced that something must be done, and done by him too, in order to his salvation: that it is not a thing of course, a thing that will do itself, but a thing about which we must strive, wrestle, and take pains. He asks not, “What may be done for me?” but, “What shall I do, that, being *now in fear and trembling*, I may *work out my salvation?*” as Paul speaks in his epistle to the church at Philippi, of which this jailer was, perhaps with respect to his trembling enquiry here, intimating that he must not only ask after salvation (as he had done), but *work out his salvation with a holy trembling*, ^{<38D>}Philippians 2:12. *Fourthly*, He is willing to do any thing: “Tell me what I must do, and I am here ready to do it. Sirs, put me into any way, if it be but the right way, and a sure way; though narrow, and thorny, and uphill, yet I will walk in it.” Note, Those who are thoroughly convinced of sin, and truly concerned about their salvation, will surrender at discretion to Jesus Christ, will give him a blank to write what he pleases, will be glad to have Christ upon his own terms, Christ upon any terms. *Fifthly*, He is inquisitive what he should do, is desirous to know what he should do, and asks those that were likely to tell him. *If you will enquire, enquire ye*, ^{<38D>}Isaiah 21:12. Those that set their faces *Zionward* must ask the way thither, ^{<2815>}Jeremiah 50:5. We cannot know it of ourselves, but God has made it known to us by his word, has appointed his ministers to assist us in consulting the scriptures, and has promised *to give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him*, to be their guide in the way of salvation. *Sixthly*, He *brought them out*, to put this question to them, that their answer might not be by duress or compulsion, but that they might prescribe to him, though he was their keeper, with the same liberty as they did to others. He brings them out of the dungeon, in hopes they will bring him out of a much worse.

(3.) They very readily directed him what he must do, v. 31. They were always ready to answer such enquiries; though they are cold, and sore, and sleepy, they do not adjourn this cause to a more convenient time and place, do not bid him come to them the next sabbath at their meeting-place by the river side, and they will tell him, but they strike while the iron is hot, take him now when he is in a good mind, lest the conviction should wear off. Now that God begins to work, it is time for them to set in as *workers together with God*. They do not upbraid him with his rude and ill carriage towards them, and his going beyond his warrant; all this is forgiven and forgotten, and they are as glad to show him the way to heaven as the best friend they have. They did not triumph over him, though he trembled; they gave him the same directions they did to others, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. One would think they should have said, “Repent of thy abusing us, in the first place.” No, that is overlooked and easily passed by, if he will but believe in Christ. This is an example to ministers to encourage penitents, to meet those that are coming to Christ and take them by the hand, not to be hard upon any for unkindness done to them, but to seek Christ's honour more than their own. Here is the sum of the whole gospel, the covenant of grace in a few words: *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*. Here is,

[1.] The happiness promised: “*Thou shalt be saved*; not only rescued from eternal ruin, but brought to eternal life and blessedness. Though thou art a *poor man*, an under-jailer or turnkey, mean and of low condition in the world, yet this shall be no bar to thy salvation. Though a great sinner, though a persecutor, yet thy heinous transgressions shall be all forgiven through the merits of Christ; and thy hard embittered heart shall be softened and sweetened by the grace of Christ, and thus thou shalt neither die for thy crime nor die of thy disease.”

[2.] The condition required: *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. We must admit the record that God hath given in his gospel concerning his Son, and assent to it as faithful, and well *worthy of all acceptance*. We must approve the method God has taken of reconciling the world to himself by a Mediator; and accept of Christ as he is offered to us, and give up ourselves to be ruled and taught and saved by him. This is the only way and a sure way to salvation. No other way of salvation than by Christ, and no other way of our being saved by Christ than by believing in him; and no danger of coming short if we take this way, for it is the way that God has

appointed, and he is faithful that has promised. It is the gospel that is to be preached to every creature, *He that believes shall be saved.*

[3.] The extension of this to his family: *Thou shalt be saved, and thy house;* that is, “God will be in Christ a God to thee and to thy seed, as he was to Abraham. Believe, and salvation shall *come to thy house,* as ~~200~~ Luke 19:9. Those of thy house that are infants shall be admitted into the visible church with thee, and thereby put into a fair way for salvation; those that are grown up shall have the means of salvation brought to them, and, be they ever so many, let them believe in Jesus Christ and they shall be saved; they are all welcome to Christ upon the same terms.”

(4.) They proceeded to instruct him and his family in the doctrine of Christ (v. 32): *They spoke unto him the word of the Lord.* He was, for aught that appears, an utter stranger to Christ, and therefore it is requisite he should be told who this Jesus is, that he may believe in him, ~~400~~ John 9:36. And, the substance of the matter lying in a little compass, they soon told him enough to make his being baptized a reasonable service. Christ's ministers should have the word of the Lord so ready to them, and so richly dwelling in them, as to be able to give instructions offhand to any that desire to hear and receive them, for their direction in the way of salvation. They spoke the word not only to him, but to *all that were in his house.* Masters of families should take care that all under their charge partake of the means of knowledge and grace, and that the word of the Lord be spoken to them; for the souls of the poorest servants are as precious as those of their masters, and are bought with the same price.

(5.) The jailer and his family were immediately baptized, and thereby took upon them the profession of Christianity, submitted to its laws, and were admitted to its privileges, upon their declaring solemnly, as the eunuch did, that they believed that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God:* He was *baptized, he and all his, straightway.* Neither he nor any of his family desired time to consider whether they should come into baptismal bonds or no; nor did Paul and Silas desire time to try their sincerity and to consider whether they should baptize them or no. But the Spirit of grace worked such a strong faith in them, all on a sudden, as superseded further debate; and Paul and Silas knew by the Spirit that it was a work of God that was wrought in them: so that there was no occasion for demur. This therefore will not justify such precipitation in ordinary cases.

(6.) The jailer was hereupon very respectful to Paul and Silas, as one that knew not how to make amends for the injury he had done to them, much less for the kindness he had received from them: He *took them the same hour of the night*, would not let them lie a minute longer in the inner prison; but,

[1.] He *washed their stripes*, to cool them, and abate the smart of them; to clean them from the blood which the stripes had fetched. It is probable that he bathed them with some healing liquor, as the good Samaritan helped the wounded man by *pouring in oil and wine*.

[2.] He *brought them into his house*, bade them welcome to the best room he had, and prepared his best bed for them. Now nothing was thought good enough for them, as before nothing bad enough.

[3.] He *set meat before them*, such as his house would afford, and they were welcome to it, by which he expressed the welcome which his soul gave to the gospel. They had spoken to him the word of the Lord, had broken the bread of life to him and his family; and he, having reaped so plentifully of their spiritual things, thought it was but reasonable that they should reap of his carnal things, ~~ROM~~ 1 Corinthians 9:11. What have we houses and tables for but as we have opportunity to serve God and his people with them?

(7.) The voice of rejoicing with that of salvation was heard in the jailer's house; never was such a truly merry night kept there before: *He rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house*. There was none in his house that refused to be baptized, and so made a jar in the harmony; but they were unanimous in embracing the gospel, which added much to the joy. Or it may be read, *He, believing in God, rejoiced all the house over; panoiki* — he went to every apartment, expressing his joy. Observe,

[1.] His believing in Christ is called believing *in God*, which intimates that Christ is God, and that the design of the gospel is so far from being to draw us from God (saying, *Go serve other gods*, ~~ROM~~ Deuteronomy 13:2) that it has a direct tendency to bring us to God.

[2.] His faith produced joy. Those that by faith have given up themselves to God in Christ as theirs have a great deal of reason to rejoice. The eunuch, when he was converted, converted, *went on his way rejoicing*; and here the jailer rejoiced. The conversion of the nations is spoken of in

the Old Testament as their rejoicing, ^{<1970>}Psalm 67:4; 96:11. For, *believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*. Believing in Christ is rejoicing in Christ.

[3.] He signified his joy to all about him. Out of the abundance of the joy in his heart, his mouth spoke to the glory of God, and their encouragement who believed in God too. Those who have themselves tasted the comforts of religion should do what they can to bring others to the taste of them. One cheerful Christian should make many.

^{<4175>}ACTS 16:35-40

PAUL AND SILAS RELEASED

In these verses we have,

I. Orders sent for the discharge of Paul and Silas out of prison v. 35, 36.

1. The magistrates that had so basely abused them the day before gave the orders; and their doing it so early, *as soon as it was day*, intimates that either they were sensible the terrific earthquake they felt at midnight was intended to plead the cause of their prisoners, or their consciences had smitten them for what they had done and made them very uneasy. While the persecuted were singing in the stocks, the persecutors were full of tossings to and fro upon their beds, through anguish of mind, complaining more of the lashes of their consciences than the prisoners did of the lashes on their backs, and more in haste to give them a discharge than they were to petition for one. Now God caused his servants to be *pitied of those that had carried them captives*, ^{<1966>}Psalm 106:46. The magistrates sent *sergeants, rabdouchous* — *those that had the rods*, the vergers, the tipstaves, the beadles, those that had been employed in beating them, that they might go and ask them forgiveness. The order was, *Let those men go*. It is probable that they designed further mischief to them, but God turned their hearts, and, as he had made their wrath hitherto to praise him, so the remainder thereof he did restrain, ^{<1970>}Psalm 76:10.

2. The jailer brought them the news (v. 36): *The magistrates have sent to let you go*. Some think the jailer had betimes transmitted an account to the magistrates of what had passed in his house that night, and so had

obtained this order for the discharge of his prisoners: *Now therefore depart*. Not that he was desirous to part with them as his guests, but as his prisoners; they shall still be welcome to his house, but he is glad they are at liberty from his stocks. God could by his grace as easily have converted the magistrates as the jailer, and have brought them to faith and baptism; but God hath *chosen the poor of this world*, ~~3015~~ James 2:5.

II. Paul's insisting upon the breach of privilege which the magistrates had been guilty of, v. 37. Paul said to the sergeants, "*They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison against all law and justice, and now do they thrust us out privily, and think to make us amends with this for the injury done us? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us our, and own that they have done us wrong.*" It is probable that the magistrates had some intimation that they were Romans, and were made sensible that their fury had carried them further than the law would bear them out; and that this was the reason why they gave orders for their discharge. Now observe,

1. Paul did not plead this before he was beaten, though it is probable that it might have prevented it, lest he should seem to be afraid of suffering for the truth which he had preached. Tully, in one of his orations, against Verres, tells of one Ganius, who was ordered by Verres to be beaten in Sicily, that all the while he was under the lash he cried out nothing but *Civis Romanus sum* — *I am a citizen of Rome*; Paul did not do so; he had nobler things than this to comfort himself with in his affliction.

2. He did plead it afterwards, to put an honour upon his sufferings and upon the cause he suffered for, to let the world know that the preachers of the gospel were not such despicable men as they were commonly looked upon to be, and that they merited better treatment. He did it likewise to mollify the magistrates towards the Christians at Philippi, and to gain better treatment for them, and beget in the people a better opinion of the Christian religion, when they saw that Paul had a fair advantage against their magistrates, might have brought his action against them and had them called to an account for what they had done, and yet did not take the advantage, which was very much to the honour of that worthy name by which he was called. Now here,

(1.) Paul lets them know how many ways they had run themselves into a premunire, and that he had law enough to know it.

[1.] They had *beaten* those that were Romans; some think that Silas was a Roman citizen as well as Paul; others that this does not necessarily follow. Paul was a citizen, and Silas was his companion. Now both the *lex Procia* and the *lex Sempronia* did expressly forbid *liberum corpus Romani civis, virgis aut aliis verberibus caedi* — *the free body of a Roman citizen to be beaten with rods or otherwise*. Roman historians give instances of cities that had their charters taken from them for indignities done to Roman citizens; we shall afterwards find Paul making use of this plea, ~~4275~~ Acts 22:25, 26. To tell them they had beaten those who were the messengers of Christ and the favourites of Heaven would have had no influence upon them; but to tell them they have abused Roman citizens will put them into a fright: so common is it for people to be more afraid of Caesar's wrath than of Christ's. He that affronts a Roman, a gentleman, a nobleman, though ignorantly, and through mistake, thinks himself concerned to cry *Peccavi* — *I have done wrong*, and make his submission; but he that persecutes a Christian because he belongs to Christ stands to it, and thinks he may do it securely, though God hath said, *He that toucheth them toucheth the apple of my eye*, and Christ has warned us of the danger of *offending his little ones*.

[2.] They had beaten them *uncondemned; indicta causa* — *without a fair hearing*, had not calmly examined what was said against them, much less enquired what they had to say for themselves. It is a universal rule of justice, *Causf cognitf possunt multi absolvi, incognitf nemo condemnari potest* — *Many may be acquitted in consequence of having had a hearing, while without a hearing no one can be condemned*. Christ's servants would not have been abused as they have been if they and their cause might but have had an impartial trial.

[3.] It was an aggravation of this that they had done it openly, which, as it was so much the greater disgrace to the sufferers, so it was the bolder defiance to justice and the law.

[4.] They had *cast them into prison*, without showing any cause of their commitment, and in an arbitrary manner, by a verbal order.

[5.] They now *thrust them out privily*; they had not indeed the impudence to stand by what they had done, but yet had not the honesty to own themselves in a fault.

(2.) He insists upon it that they should make them an acknowledgment of their error, and give them a public discharge, to make it the more honourable, as they had done them a public disgrace, which made that the more disgraceful: “*Let them come themselves, and fetch us out*, and give a testimony to our innocency, and that we have done nothing worthy of stripes or of bonds.” It was not a point of honour that Paul stood thus stiffly upon, but a point of justice, and not to himself so much as to his cause: “*Let them come and stop the clamours of the people, by confessing that we are not the troublers of the city.*”

III. The magistrates' submission, and the reversing of the judgment given against Paul and Silas, v. 38, 39.

1. The magistrates were frightened when they were told (though it may be they knew it before) that Paul was a Roman. They feared when they heard it, lest some of his friends should inform the government of what they had done, and they should fare the worse for it. The proceedings of persecutors have often been illegal, even by the law of nations, and often inhuman, against the law of nature, but always sinful, and against God's law.

2. They *came and besought them* not to take advantage of the law against them, but to overlook the illegality of what they had done and say no more of it: they *brought them out* of the prison, owning that they were wrongfully put into it, and desired them that they would peaceably and quietly *depart out of the city*. Thus Pharaoh and his servants, who had set God and Moses at defiance, came to Moses, and *bowed down themselves to him, saying, Get thee out*, ^{<2118>}Exodus 11:8. God can make the enemies of his people ashamed of their envy and enmity to them, ^{<2351>}Isaiah 26:11. Jerusalem is sometimes made a burdensome stone to those that heave at it, which they would gladly get clear of, ^{<312>}Zechariah 12:3. Yet, if the repentance of these magistrates had been sincere, they would not have desired them to depart out of their city (as the Gadarenes desired to be rid of Christ), but would have courted their stay, and begged of them to continue in their city, to show them the way of salvation. But many are convinced that Christianity is not to be persecuted who yet are not convinced that it ought to be embraced, or at least are not persuaded to embrace it. They are compelled to do honour to Christ and his servants, *to worship before their feet, and to know that he has loved them* (^{<619>}Revelation 3:9), and yet do not go so far as to have benefit by Christ, or to come in for a share in his love.

IV. The departure of Paul and Silas from Philippi, v. 40. They went out of the prison when they were legally discharged, and not till then, though they were illegally committed, and then,

1. They took leave of their friends: they *went to the house of Lydia*, where probably the disciples had met to pray for them, and there they *saw the brethren*, or visited them at their respective habitations (which was soon done, they were so few); and they *comforted them*, by telling them (saith an ancient Greek commentary) what God had done for them, and how he had owned them in the prison. They encouraged them to keep close to Christ, and hold fast the profession of their faith, whatever difficulties they might meet with, assuring them that all would then end well, everlastingly well. Young converts should have a great deal said to them to comfort them, for *the joy of the Lord will be very much their strength*.

2. They quitted the town: *They departed*. I wonder they should do so; for, now that they had had such an honourable discharge from their imprisonment, surely they might have gone on at least for some time in their work without danger; but I suppose they went away upon that principle of their Master's (~~ACTS~~ Mark 1:38). *Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth*. Paul and Silas had an extraordinary call to Philippi; and yet, when they have come thither, they see little of the fruit of their labours, and are soon driven thence. Yet they did not come in vain. Though the beginnings here were *small, the latter end greatly increased*; now they laid the foundation of a church at Philippi, which became very eminent, had its bishops and deacons, and people that were more generous to Paul than any other church, as appears by his epistle to the ~~SOUL~~ Philippians 1:1; 4:25. Let not ministers be discouraged, though they see not the fruit of their labours presently; the seed sown seems to be lost under the clods, but it shall come up again in a plentiful harvest in due time.