

Acts 16

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Tape # 8015
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Paul was wondering how the believers were doing in those churches that they had established. He wanted to go visit them, encourage them. So you remember how Barnabas was wanting to take his nephew, John Mark. Paul said no, I don't want that boy. He deserted us on the first journey. Let's not take him. And Barnabas said, well I want to take him. He's my nephew. He's matured and I want to take him. Paul said, no I don't want him to go with us. So the contention was so great that Barnabas took Mark and he went Cypress. And Paul then took Silas, who was one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. They together went on through Cilicia and Pamphylia. So in chapter sixteen:

Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. Back into this area, that is present day Turkey. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. Timothy and Paul became bonded together, almost in a father-son relationship. In fact Paul refers to him as his son in the faith. So no doubt, Paul, in his first missionary journey, met Timothy's mother and his grandmother. They had been schooling Timothy in the word of God. Now as Paul returns he finds Timothy matured. There develops this bond. Timothy becomes one of the traveling companions with Paul. In six of Paul's epistles, he mentions in the greetings and salutations, how that Timothy sent his greetings also. Paul in one his epistles said he was sending to them Timothy because there is no man who is so akin to my heart for the ministry as is Timothy. There was a beautiful bond that was developed. Of course, Paul wrote the two letters to Timothy that we have in the New Testament. And this close, beautiful bond as Timothy became a real asset to Paul and to the ministry. From a youth, Paul said, he was taught the Scriptures by his mother and by his grandmother. Now his mother was a Jewess. His father was a Greek. ²He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Timothy was well reported by the brethren that were there at Lystra and Iconium. They said, oh he is a fine young man.

³*Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek. Now this is interesting. You remember later that Paul later wrote, I have become all things to all men that I might gain the more. To the Jew I became as a Jew. To the Greek I became as a Greek. All things to all men. And here is one of those beautiful flexibility things where Paul can do in order to avert unnecessary strife. He can have Timothy circumcised so that the Jews that are there, knowing that his father is a Greek, won't be offended. Now Paul would be the first to say that circumcision isn't necessary. In fact in the previous chapter there was this big dispute over this because there were certain Jews from Jerusalem who had come to Antioch and said unless you are circumcised and keep the law of Moses, you can't be saved. And Paul had this big dispute with them. They went back to Jerusalem to settle it. And yet in order for peace, Paul is willing to allow Timothy to go through the ritual of circumcision just to keep from having a stir with the Jews.*

As I have often said, blessed are the flexible, they shall not be broken. I mean, learn to bend. Rigidity is a terrible thing. It's important that we learn to be flexible. That we can bend when it's necessary. This is one of those circumstances where as Paul wrote to the Romans, live peaceably with all men as much as you are able. And it's not really a compromise. It's no big thing. You know, so face them, heartache and grief, and some problems as those that are weak in the faith. Paul sort of taught that in Romans. Those that are weak in the faith, eat vegetables. Those that are strong, eat meat. And the one who eats just vegetables, the vegetarian, is not to judge the one who eats meat and the one who eats meats isn't to despise the vegetarian. Just live peaceably with all men. Then Paul goes on to say, if my eating meat would offend a weaker brother. I won't eat meat as long as the world stands. Why should I destroy the work of Christ in them because I have the liberty to eat meat? So when I'm around him, I won't order a hamburger. When I get by myself I'll get a cheeseburger. You know, I mean, just, don't offend people if you can keep from it. Of course there are limitations to that. As much as depends on you live peaceably with all men. So Paul had Timothy circumcised because of the Jews in those quarters.

⁴*And as they went through the cities,* Here's the interesting thing. Then as they traveled through the cities, *they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.* What were those decrees? You don't have to be circumcised! Just keep yourself from fornication and from things strangled and you do well. And so they brought to them the message of liberty. We're not under the law. We don't have to be circumcised and yet, that's the very message they were carrying. And yet Paul had Timothy circumcised. So it's one of those things, just again an accommodation to keep people from being offended. ⁵*So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.* Beautiful isn't it? The growing church, established in the faith. Increasing in number daily.

⁶*Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.* Now putting two and two together, Luke said they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit. When Paul was in Galatia, he wrote to them later and he said you remember how that I was with you at the first in great infirmities and weaknesses. In other words, I was sick! So sick that he couldn't go on. He wanted to go to Asia. God didn't want him to go to Asia. Paul was strong willed. He was planning to go to Asia still, packing his bags. So God just let him get so sick, he couldn't get out of bed. Now as Paul looks back on it he sees the hand of God. He says, well I wanted to go to Asia but the Spirit forbid me. In looking back it's interesting how that we can see the hand of God in so many circumstances. That at the time we didn't particularly understand it. And at the time Paul probably didn't understand it. This is God sort of enforcing His will. But later as he thinks about it, he sees how God's hand was there directing him. And forbidding him to go to Asia.

⁷*After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.*

⁸*So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.* ⁹*And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."*

There in a vision in the night, Paul saw a man from Macedonia. He was praying saying come over to Macedonia and help us. Paul wanted to go to Asia. God wanted Paul to go to Europe. God is directing Paul toward Europe. And now by direct revelation, a vision, a man coming to Paul, saying come over to Macedonia and help us. Now it is quite possible that that man was Luke. Because as

Paul now makes preparation to go to Macedonia, Luke joins company with Paul. The story no longer is “they”, but it now becomes we and us, as Luke at this point joins the party. Timothy has become a part of it. And now, Luke becomes a part of this traveling, evangelistic team. So there are those who believe that it is quite possible that the man he saw in the vision was Luke and that later on he met Luke and it was confirmed.

¹⁰Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us (notice the we and the us, Luke joins the company) to preach the gospel to them. ¹¹Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course (that is the wind is behind them) to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, It took them only two days! God’s will, I mean things are flowing and they arrived there in two day in Neapolis, which was the port city and then eight miles in from there to Philippi. ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. That is a Roman colony. Philippi was the site of one of the major battles within the Roman Empire. It was there that Brutus and Cassius were defeated by Mark Anthony and Augustus. And after the defeat they made the city of Philippi a Roman colony, which meant that everybody who was born in Philippi became a Roman citizen by birth, which was an advantage. Also, it meant that it became a place for Roman government and the Roman law to be dispensed. The local judges were not from Philippi but they were sent from Rome. They were appointed by the senate and sent from Rome. So it was a Roman colony, governed by Rome, directly through these judges appointed by the Roman senate. And so it was the chief city in that part of Macedonia. Paul had a pattern of going to the major cities and making them the hub for the network of churches that would go out from that major center.

And we were staying in that city for some days. ¹³And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. As we have mentioned if there were ten adult male Jews in the city they were required to build a synagogue for worship. If there were fewer than ten adult male Jews, then they would worship in a designated spot that was usually by a river. Often times it was just a little walled in enclosure. No roof, but just short walls. Just a sheltered enclosure. Some times there was nothing at all. You remember in the Psalms as he speaks about the captivity in Babylon. How they went down by the river and there they cried, you know, because of their captivity. But they would meet usually by the river. It is quite possible that there was strong anti-Semitism in Philippi and it was uncomfortable for a Jew to live there because of the anti-Jewish sentiment. That could have been one of the reasons why there were not many Jews in Philippi. But just some women, not even men mentioned, would gather by the river for prayer on the Sabbath Day.

¹⁴Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple (a business woman) from the city of Thyatira (that’s back over in Turkey), who worshipped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. I like that phrase! The Lord opened her heart. It’s glorious when God opens our heart to the gospel. It’s glorious when the Lord opens out hearts to the Word of God! Such was the case of this notable woman, Lydia.

¹⁵And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us. So a business woman and a great sales person. I mean listen to the pressure she puts on. If you have judged us worthy come and stay at our house. Well, if you don’t stay, then you are not judging her worthy.

What pressure! A sharp sales person. And Luke says, she constrained or persuaded us. Good business woman.

16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, (This is probably again down by the riverside.) that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. A girl who was possessed by an evil spirit and she was a channeler, that is the evil spirits would speak through her, giving guidance, direction to people, telling fortunes and those men that controlled her were making a lot of money off her supernatural powers, though they were demonic powers.

17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." One of Satan's tactics to hinder the work of God is to become involved in the work of God. One of the great curses of the church has been its compromise with the world. Satan, first of all tried to destroy the church by a direct frontal assault. Not being able to destroy it by a direct frontal assault, he then became more subtle and he joined the church. Then he began to introduce into the church all of these false doctrines that have plagued the church through the centuries. Very quickly the church lapsed into carnality as Paul had to deal with the Corinthian church. It lapsed into worldly organization as Paul had to deal with the Galatian church, Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you that you would so soon depart from the truth, having begun in the Spirit are you going to be made perfect in the flesh? And Jesus dealt with much of the false doctrine that had infiltrated the church before John died. In the Book of Revelation you find Jesus rebuking the churches because they had left their first love. They had become mechanical in their worship and in their service to God. It was no longer from the heart but it was just an organized kind of machinery. They had allowed the doctrines of the Nicolaitans, to infiltrate. They had embraced the doctrines of Balaam, which was the introduction of idolatry. They had allowed that woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, to influence the church to spiritual adultery and fornication. So it was by this infiltrating that the churches' influence became greatly weakened. So Paul though this woman is saying the truth, will not accept her advertising of them. These are the servants of the most high God! Yes, indeed they were. They showed the way of salvation. Yes, indeed they did! It is interesting that even with Jesus, He would not allow the demons to speak. We know who You are, the Holy One of God. And He would command them to be silent. The Bible asks the question, what fellowship has light with darkness? And yet there has been that attempt to sort of combine them. And today there is a strong movement toward ecumenism, in which they are saying that we need to put aside our differences in our doctrinal beliefs, in order that we might unify together. We can't do it. We cannot compromise the doctrinal purity of the church for the sake of unification. We must maintain as much as possible the doctrinal purity.

18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. *20* And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, (as we said there weren't many Jews in that city. Probably because of anti-Semitic feelings and thus they are impressing "being Jews.") exceedingly trouble our city; *21* and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or

observe." They are teaching us things as a Roman citizen we can't observe. What were they teaching? They were teaching that Jesus Christ is Lord and they we must submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Now as a Roman citizen you had to acknowledge Caesar is lord. The government is lord. Lookout! Because we are getting close to that in the United States. They want us to acknowledge that the government is lord. And more and more they are seeking to impose restrictions on the church. In reality we are required of course to register with the government. To file articles of incorporation with the government. We don't need the government's approval to exist. We have God's approval to exist. But again living peaceably with all men as much as lies in us, we are organized and we are incorporated and you know we file the reports with the government. But it's this whole concept of Caesar is lord. More and more our freedoms are being taken from us and the acknowledgment of the lordship of the government over our lives. So they are teaching us these things, customs and all that are not lawful for us to receive or to observe because we are Romans.

22 Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. *23* And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. *24* Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. Perhaps their hands and their heads too, but at least their feet fastened in stocks in the inner prison. Here they are, directed by the Holy Spirit to come to Macedonia to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of peace, the gospel of love, the gospel of grace, the gospel of mercy, and yet here they are in the inner prison in the stocks, their backs throbbing with pain because of the beating that they had received, enough to make you question the calling of God. It would make you question whether or not God was leading you.

25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Rather than being discouraged, rather than being down and all, they were praying and they were singing praises unto God. Now singing is a tremendous way to alter our attitude. It's a way of praising of God. It's a great way of praising God. I will sing unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously and after the victories and after the work of God, so often they would write a song to remind them of what God had done. In Deuteronomy 32:1-43 you have the song of Moses. Glorious song of God's power, God's deliverance. He is our Rock There is no Rock like our Rock! A great song in what God has done in delivering the people of Israel.

When God used Deborah (Judges 4 and 5) in the battle against Sisera, after the victory that God brought over Sisera, then she wrote a song that was then sung. A song of God's power and God's deliverance.

David was constantly writing songs about God, about what God had done and the delivering power of God. David would encourage himself by singing of the Lord and singing to the Lord. Great way to buoy one's spirit! To keep your focus on the Lord. How much better than to focus on the problems. And say, oh my, aren't we miserable? Oh my this is horrible. My, my, back hurts. Oh my. Oh my! You know, I just feel so horrible. I wonder if God really loves us? I wonder why God would allow this? And rather than get into the "Why?" cesspool, just sing of the Lord's grace and the Lord's goodness and the Lord's love. As you focus on the Lord it's amazing how that our problems seem to diminish into nothingness. Oh how we need to see life in the light of the Lord!

And the many problems in the light of His power, not in the light of my ineptness and inability, but to see what God can do. To declare what God can do.

So they were singing and the prisoners heard them. The Greek language is a little forceful. They listened attentively to them! They were listening, probably wondering, who in the world are these guys, in those conditions, singing?

26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. Usually they were chained to the wall. A chain would be fastened to the wall and around their wrist. And this earthquake shook these pins in the walls loose so that everyone was free. It shook the doors open.

27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. This jailer is an interesting character that we meet in this chapter. He is very callous, hard hearted. These prisoners are turned over to him, evidently suffering. Their backs are bloody. They had had their clothes stripped off that they might be beaten and caned. And their backs rather raw and bleeding. Rather than attending at all to them. He just fastened them in the stocks and then goes to sleep. He's not concerned. But now when the prison is shaken open by the earthquake, the men have been freed, he is ready to commit suicide because under Roman law if prisoners have been entrusted into your keeping and they escape, you have to forfeit your life.

You remember back a few chapter, when the Lord delivered Peter out of prison. When Herod stretched forth his hand against the church. He had James killed. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he had Peter put in prison. That night the angel of the Lord came to Peter in the prison. Put your sandals on. Follow me. And the door opened of their own accord. Peter was out. And the next day when they came to get Peter, they said well we found the prison was shut, the guards were all standing in their places, but Peter wasn't there. So Herod ordered the guards put to death. That was the penalty for allowing a prisoner to escape. So this fellow just figured he would save Rome a job. He would take his own life. He would commit suicide because he figured the prisoners had escaped.

28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."
29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" An important question! What must you do to be saved? One time they asked Jesus what must we do to do the works of God? What work does God want us to do? The answer to both questions was the same. Jesus said (John 6:28-29) to those who said to those who wanted to know what work they had to do to do the work of God, said, "Believe on Him whom He has sent. This is the work of God." Just to believe on Jesus Christ. To this Philippian jailer who wanted to know what he had to do to be saved, Paul answered: *31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."* Notice he didn't say, "Join our church." He didn't give him any list of rules and regulations. He didn't lay any law trip on him. It was very simple! Just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Is it possible that it is that simple? Is it possible that we have sort of complicated the issue by adding so many other requirements? Is it possible that God will save a person by their simple believing in Jesus Christ? That was Paul's answer. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Writing to the Romans (Romans 10:9), Paul said, "that if you

confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Again, very simple. So simple that any child can grasp it and can believe. Oh, God help us to keep the simplicity of the gospel! And not be caught up in these theological debates and nonsensical issues that they argue over, but just to hold on to the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus!

³²*Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.* They began to share the Word of God with them. ³³*And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes.* His heart has changed! It’s no longer hard and callous. But he washed their wounds. *And immediately he and all his family were baptized.* ³⁴*Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.* He was converted! Now, again how God leads us. How God works and all. God said, My ways are not your ways. My ways are beyond your finding out. And so often what we look upon as we are going through a particular experience as some horrible tragedy that we have been forsaken of God. That surely, where is God in this situation? If God loves me why does He allow this to happen? And we have all of these things that so often trouble us in our circumstances that we don’t understand. Circumstances that are difficult. That are sometimes painful. And we wonder why do I have to go through this?

Here is a case where God knows the heart of this Philippian jailer. He knows his need of salvation. And He knows what it will take to bring him to a faith in Jesus Christ. It will take a couple of prisoners who when put in the direst of circumstances, can still sing praises to the Lord. I’m sure that before he went to sleep he was rather impressed with those guys back there singing. It took an earthquake! I wonder what it takes sometimes to get people to the Lord, you know. With this guy it took an earthquake. Which to him was a life threatening situation. But it took pain and suffering for Paul to get them in jail. You know, to be beaten and then to be thrown in jail. I mean that was a painful experience. Yet God’s love for this jailer and as Paul said (Romans 8:18), what’s a little suffering to be compared with the glory of heaven? He talks about the present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. Sometimes a little sacrifice on our part. Sometimes God will put us through some troubling situations, but He is seeking through them to reach some friend, who we are not even aware of, who has been observing our life and sees us go through that crisis with the victory of the Lord and are convinced of the reality of the gospel as they see the way you can handle the difficult circumstances. It becomes a witness to them. Convincing them of the truth of the gospel that you have proclaimed! God in His love was reaching the jailer there in Phillipi. So he rejoiced, believing in God with all of his house. Not only him but the whole family was brought to Christ.

³⁵*And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go."* Why the order, we don’t know. It could be that they realized that that was an injustice that was done to these Jewish men. And so ordered that they be set free. They had a change of heart in the night and realized that it was not really just.

³⁶*So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace."* I like Paul, a man of spirit. ³⁷*But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out."* Now to beat

a Roman who is uncondemned was a capital crime. These judges could be put to death for that. The Roman citizens were protected by Roman law. You remember later on, and it's interesting. Later on when Paul was in Jerusalem and his preaching to the Jews there on the temple mount sort of created a mini riot and the captain of the Roman guard as they brought Paul into the safety of the Antonio fortress, said to the soldiers, as he was walking up, scourge him, find out what he said to make them so angry out there. And so as they were preparing to give Paul the beating, he said, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a Roman citizen who has not been charged?" And the guy ran to the captain and said, do you know that that is a Roman citizen? He wheeled around and came to Paul and said, are you a Roman citizen? Paul said, yes sir! He said, I had to purchase my citizenship. It cost me. How much did you have to pay? Paul said, I was free born. Well needless to say, they didn't beat him. Now in this case you wonder why didn't Paul claim his Roman citizenship here? I don't know. Why would he do it one place and not another. But had he said that he probably wouldn't have been thrown in jail and the jailer wouldn't have been saved. So God has His ways of working to bring His truth and His love to those whose hearts He knows, will be open to receive.

³⁸*And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.* ³⁹*Then they came and pleaded* (personally came and begged) *with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city.* Hey, would you guys please leave? Interesting isn't it that that is the same request that the people of Gadara made of Jesus after He had cast the legion of demons out of that man and the swine went down and were drown in the sea, they came and they, the same word is used, they desired that Jesus would depart from their coast. Now it's interesting that it is the same issue here. It's this girl who has been delivered from demon possession that has created this whole ruckus to begin with. It's interesting that there are people who would rather live in company with devils than in company with God. Interesting. And times have not changed people that much. There are many people today who are much more comfortable living with devils than they are living with people of God.

We had a young girl who was into witchcraft, heavy into drugs, who received Jesus Christ. God set her free from the drugs and of course she got out of her witchcraft. Her father began so upset and so angry. He said I would rather she would be back on drugs than into this Jesus bit! I at least understood her then. I don't understand her now. More comfortable living in company with Satan than in company with God. And thus they begged them to leave the city.

⁴⁰*So they went out of the prison* (They didn't immediately leave the city.) *and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.* Now Luke probably stayed. The reason why I say that, is that again as Luke is recounting the story, he uses the word "they" again. Up until now he had been talking about "us" and "we" and so forth. But now he begins to employ the word "they" and he continues to employ the word "they" until you get to chapter twenty when Paul returns to Philippi and again he uses the "we" and the "us". So as they left, they probably left Luke to minister there in Philippi because a strong church developed in the city of Philippi and later Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians. Now if you want to get an A+ on the lesson, read the letter to the Philippians this week and you will get extra credit. It will give you a little better background now into the church that was established in Philippi as the result of Paul's ministry and probably Luke's continued ministry after Paul left. And so you'll notice that the

personal pronouns are not used again by Luke until he gets to chapter twenty and then once more he begins to speak about “we” and ‘us” and all. Just an interesting sidelight.

Father, thank You, for Your love and for Your goodness and for the work of Your Holy Spirit, even when we are not aware of it. Thank You, Lord, that we can just commit our ways to You, knowing that You will direct our path. And, Lord, we pray that You will help us that when things are tough and things seem to be going against us, when the days are very dark and grim that You give us a song of praise and love and thanksgiving. That we might not focus on the difficulties of our circumstances but will focus on the greatness of Your love and of Your goodness and of Your mercy towards us. Lord, bless Your people. Fill them Lord with Your love and with Your Spirit. And let us be instruments, Lord, through which You can do Your work and accomplish Your purposes. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.