

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

An Exposition

by

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Before we follow the second missionary journey of the Apostle Paul, it may not be out of place to give a little chronological table of the life of this chosen instrument, beginning with his conversion down to the close of the second journey. This will help in reviewing the remarkable activity of the great apostle to the Gentiles and put before us the events from Chapter 9-18 in a concise form.

About A.D. 36	Conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Acts 9.
36-39	At Damascus-Preaching in the synagogue. His journey into Arabia. Returns to Damascus - and flees from Damascus. His FIRST visit to Jerusalem; three years after his conversion. Back to Tarsus. Acts 9:23-26. Galatians 1:18.
39-40	Rest of the Jewish Churches. Acts 9:31. Paul preaches the gospel in Syria and Cilicia. Galatians 1:21. A period of uncertain length. - During this time he probably experienced many of the perils and sufferings which he recounts to the Corinthians. II Corinthians 11.
40-43	He is brought from Tarsus to Antioch by Barnabas; and remains there a year before the famine. Acts 11:26.
44	Paul's SECOND visit to Jerusalem, with the collection. Acts 11:30.
45	He returns to Antioch. Acts 12:2-5. Paul's FIRST missionary journey with Barnabas to Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra. Returns to Antioch, Derbe.
46-49	Labors a long time in Antioch. Dissension and disputation about circumcision. Acts 14, 15:1, 2. Paul's THIRD visit to Jerusalem with Barnabas, fourteen years after his conversion. Galatians 2:1.
50	They attend the council at Jerusalem. Acts 15. Return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, with Judas and Silas. Acts 15:32-35. Paul's SECOND missionary journey with Silas and Timothy. From Antioch to Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Troas. Luke joins him. Acts 16:10.

51	Entrance of the Gospel into Europe. Acts 16:11-13. Paul visits Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth. Spends a year and six months at Corinth. Acts 18:11.
52	First Epistle to the Thessalonians written. Second Epistle to the Thessalonians written.
53	Paul leaves Corinth and sails to Ephesus. Acts 18:18, 19.
54	Paul's FOURTH visit to Jerusalem at the feast. His return to Antioch.

The second missionary journey of Paul is now before us and the divine record is full of interest. The sixteenth chapter shows the progress of the Gospel from Asia to Europe. We divide this chapter into four parts.

I. In Derbe and Lystra: Timotheus chosen and circumcised by Paul (Verses 1-5).

II. The Holy Spirit forbids the preaching of the Word in Asia (Verses 6-8).

III. The vision of the man of Macedonia and the journey there (Verses 9-12).

IV. The Gospel in Europe. Events in Philippi (Verses 13-40).

I. In Derbe and Lystra: Timotheus chosen and circumcised by Paul.

“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Verses 1-5).

Derbe and Lystra, familiar to us from the first missionary journey, are visited again.

In Lystra, Paul had healed the cripple, and there he must have met the Jewess Eunice, who lived with her mother, Lois, and whose son was Timotheus. Eunice was a believer and so was the grandmother of Timotheus (II Timothy 1:5). He had a bringing up in the Holy Scriptures (II Timothy 3:15).

The young man had an excellent report by the brethren of Lystra and Iconium. The Holy Spirit moved the Apostle to have Timotheus to go forth with him. The Epistles to Timothy shed more light on this.

In I Timothy 1:18 we read:

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou mightest war a good warfare.”

Timothy had been marked out by the Holy Spirit through the gift of prophecy as the proper companion of the Apostle. No mention is made in the record before us of the laying on of hands. However, we read of it in the Epistles to Timothy.

“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hand of the presbytery” (I Timothy 4:14). “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (II Timothy 1:6).

This laying on of hands by the elders and by the Apostle Paul must have been done in Lystra. The circumcision of Timotheus is prominently mentioned. Paul circumcised him, and the reason of this act - **“because of the Jews which were in those quarters.”**

This action of Paul has been often condemned as an action which was not according to the mind of the Spirit. We do not think such was the case at all. That Paul’s act in circumcising Timothy must have produced a stir among the Gentile Christians can easily be imagined. But recently their minds had been agitated about circumcision. The message of the false leaders - **“except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved”** - was still fresh in their memories.

And now Paul himself circumcised one whose father was a Greek.

Paul’s teaching on circumcision was well known; he was the apostle of the uncircumcision. Did not this action side him with the law keepers and the Judaizers? But looked upon in the right way, all these charges of inconsistency and going back to the law fall down. The law has nothing to say about the circumcision of the offspring of mixed marriages. It is well known that, if there was a mixed marriage (i.e., between a Jew and a Gentile), the law would have nothing to say to the offspring.

“Legally, the Jewish father could not own his own children born of a Gentile mother, or vice versa (see Ezra 10). Now Timothy being the offspring of such a marriage, there could be no claim, even if there was license to circumcise him; and Paul condescends out of grace to those who were on lower ground, and stops their mouths most effectually.” *

* William Kelly, *introduction to Acts*.

His act then was not according to Law, for circumcision in Timothy’s case was not commanded but it was done on the ground of grace; he did not want to put a stumbling block into the way of the Jews.

I Corinthians 9:20 gives the fullest reason for this act of the Apostle:

“And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law.”

We see then the apostolic band, Paul, Silas and Timothy, going through the different cities making known the decrees of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, that is, what had been agreed upon concerning the relation of believing Gentiles to the law. How needful this was for these Galatian churches!

These Galatians were by nature fickle-minded and unstable.

When Paul was with them they were ready to pluck out their eyes and give them to the apostle (Galatians 4:15); some time later they were only too ready to listen to the Judaizing teachers and Paul had to write them:

“I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel” (Galatians 1:6).

The effect of the ministry of the apostle and the declaration of the decision of the Jerusalem council resulted in the strengthening of the churches and in an increased membership.

II. The Holy Spirit forbids the preaching of the Word in Asia.

“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas” (Verses 6-8).

They travel on throughout Phrygia and Galatia. Though there is no record given of work done here, it does not mean that they were idle and had no testimony for the multitudes. But suddenly their plans of evangelization were halted by the voice of the Holy Spirit. He forbade them to preach the Word in Asia. Their intention was to reach now the large province of Asia * with its flourishing cities. But the Holy Spirit entered a protest against this plan.

*At that time a large territory of Asia Minor along the Aegean Sea was called “Asia.”

He did not want to have the Word preached at that time in Asia. Later Paul spent three years in the capital of the province, in Ephesus, and all Asia heard the Word.

Then they reached the northern part of the province, Mysia; obedient to the voice of the Holy Spirit, they did not speak the Word. They then expected to reach Bithynia, which borders the Black Sea, but the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. He would not let them go there. Bithynia heard the Word at another time, perhaps through Peter, for his first Epistle is addressed to the strangers throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

Christianity became so strong in that province at the beginning of the second century that idol worship was seriously affected. *

* From a letter of the Roman governor Pliny.

But the Holy Spirit had His own time and ways for giving the Gospel to these provinces. This shows clearly that the Holy Spirit must guide and direct in service. How He arrested the messengers and suffered them not to proceed is not stated. They followed His guidance obediently.

How necessary it is for the servant of Christ, be he an evangelist or a teacher, to depend on the Holy Spirit for a direction!

Waiting on the Lord and then to go forth guided by His Spirit is the true way of a successful ministry.

He must point out the way and the places and the time when and where the precious Word is to be spoken. Such humble reliance upon the direction of the Holy Spirit is but little known in our days. The great movements of our times seem to place more stress on organization, widespread advertising methods and financial support, than on the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The servants of the Lord Jesus Christ ministering the Gospel and the Word in the end of this present evil age need the guidance of the Holy Spirit as much as the apostle in the beginning of the age. And the Holy Spirit is today the same as He was then, when He suffered them not to minister in Asia and in Bithynia. We also call attention to the true rendering **“the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not.”**

The blessed Lord walked on earth in the power of the Spirit and now the same Spirit who led Him while on earth, leads and guides his own into service.

In this action of the Holy Spirit He assumed once more His authority, which, as we saw, was not fully recognized in the beginning of the second missionary journey, as He was recognized when Paul went forth the first time. He had to be held back from going in self-choosing to places which were not then to be visited. Thus kept back from ministry in Bithynia they turned towards the seacoast and came to Troas. This seaport was located opposite the European Continent and Macedonia was the nearest province. Not permitted to preach in Asia, held back from ministry in Bithynia, a double course was open to the apostle, either to go back to Antioch or to cross over to Europe.

III. The vision of the man of Macedonia, the journey there.

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days” (Verses 9-12).

The Lord, who had kept them back by His Spirit from going into the provinces, which were not to be reached at that time, now makes His will known where they were to go. All the uncertainty and perplexity which had rested upon the little company is now to be lifted. That there was deep soul exercise and continued prayer we may well surmise. They cast themselves completely on the Lord and He now directs them.

Paul had a vision during that night. He beheld a man from Macedonia, whom he must have recognized as such by his dress or some other way and he prayed him - **“Come over into Macedonia and help us.”**

And after he had seen the vision they immediately decided to cross over into Macedonia. They had gathered first by spiritual intelligence that the meaning of the vision was that the Lord called them to preach the Gospel in that land. All this is full of encouragement to God's servant. If we only learn to wait and trust in Him, He will direct our steps.

However, the vision Paul had must not be taken as the common mode of guidance, nor as something which was to be repeated. We are to walk in faith and not by sight, and faith does not want sight, nor expects visions to know the will of the Lord.

The prophecy of Joel in which dreams and visions are mentioned does not concern the present age at all.

The people who claim to have visions and dreams now, as a result of a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit, are generally, if not always the subjects of delusion. When a Christian is fully obedient to the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God fills him, he does not want and does not need visions and dreams. The vision Paul had was an extraordinary event. It was unexpected and unasked for.

According to the so-called Bezan text * they found in the harbor a ship sailing the next morning.

* A Greek MS. of the Gospels and Acts Written in the Sixth Century, which came into possession of Beza the scholar and reformer. It has many variations from the ordinary text.

This may have been the case, for the text shows that there was no delay in their departure. Whenever the Lord calls to a service He also opens the way providentially.

The tenth verse is interesting for another reason.

The pronoun is now changed from “they” to “we.”

From this we learn that Luke, the beloved physician and the chosen instrument to write this historical book, joined the party. He does not mention his name at all, but keeps himself completely in the background. May we profit by this beautiful example of humility! From Samothracia they came to Neapolis and from thence to Philippi.

Philippi, the first European city in which the Gospel of the Son of God was preached, is described as the chief city of that part of Macedonia and a colony (verse 12).

This city had been founded by Philip of Macedon, to keep the wild Thracians in check, which were the neighbors of the Macedonians. In 42 B.C., a decisive battle was fought during the Roman civil wars, and Philippi was made a Roman colony and settled with soldiers. It was mostly inhabited by Roman citizens. It was a city filled with idolatry. The presence of Lydia of Thyatira gives the hint that a trade in purple must have existed there. No synagogue was located in the city. The events which transpired here are given in detail and occupy the rest of this chapter.

IV. The Gospel in Europe. Events in Philippi.

The first incident recorded is the conversion of Lydia, a seller of purple, of the City of Thyatira.

“And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us” (Verses 13-15).

They may have arrived quite early in the week and waited for the sabbath. But there was no synagogue in the city, since the Apostle and his companions to find the few Jews in that city went out of the city by the riverside, where prayer was wont to be made. The river was the small stream Gangites.

It was the custom of the Jews to go to the riverside or to the sea for prayer, most likely on account of the different washings commanded by the law. Of this we read already in Ezra (8:15, 21). Many other sources speak of this custom.

The Apostle and his associates found a company of women gathered there. We wonder if Paul looked for the man whom he had seen in his vision. But there was no man present; only a company of women. But these messengers were not discouraged by the humble audience, the first which ever gathered in Europe to hear the Gospel.

They did not despise the small things but were ready to speak to the few women who had come together for prayer.

Paul spoke to them. His words are not given, but he had one theme, the Gospel of Grace, and of this and the Lord Jesus Christ, His death on the cross and His resurrection he assuredly spoke. Among the women was Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which was situated in the province Asia, where the door had been closed. Lydia was a worshipper of God. She had turned to the true God and had dropped idolatry. She was a pious soul earnestly seeking after the truth; this piety was seen in her seeking out on the sabbath those who worship the Lord. She was, like Cornelius, converted, but had no knowledge of salvation, because she knew nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then the Lord opened the heart of Lydia. A blessed word this is.

He Himself must open the doors of the hearts of the hearers. Human hands could not do this; the power belongs to Him alone, unless the Lord goes before and prepares the hearts for the reception of the truth and removes the bars, all efforts are in vain.

May those who go forth to preach the Gospel look to the Lord to open the hearts of the hearers.

When precious souls accept the truth, let us give the praise and the glory to Him and not to the evangelists. Alas! how much work is being done in which the Lord has no share, in which He and His Spirit is dishonored.

There is also a special significance in the fact that Lydia was from Thyatira. It is more than possible that she carried the Gospel to her native city in Asia. An assembly was there and from the words of our Lord in the message to Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29) we learn that another woman corrupted Christianity there. **“I have this against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols”** (Revelation 2:20). Such a woman had sprung up in Thyatira, the opposite from the gentle Lydia with her beautiful experience and Christian character. Prophetically, Jezebel in Thyatira stands for Rome, **“the woman clothed in purple and scarlet.”**

The baptism of herself and her household followed immediately, and having had her heart opened, she now opened her house to Paul and his companions. She besought them and, evidently a rich woman, she showed great humility - **“if ye judge me to be faithful to the Lord.”**

And they abode in her house. She fully identified herself with the messengers of the Lord, and must have shown them great kindness. Her house became the home of Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke, and the gathering place of the assembly in Philippi (verse 40). No doubt later in sending fellowship from Philippi to the Apostle (Philippians 4:14-16) she had a large share in this. Thus the blessed fruits of the Spirit were abundantly revealed.

“And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour” (Verses 16-18).

The second event in Philippi is the deliverance of the damsel, possessed with the spirit of Python.

The enemy is now coming to the front once more. He could not leave the entrance of Europe by the Gospel unchallenged and so he begins his work. He comes in the garb of an angel of light and appears as a friend of the servants of Christ, seemingly ready to help the cause of the Apostle. A damsel, most likely a slave girl, had a spirit of divination, or, as the word is in the language, of Python. Python was the name, supposedly, of a great dragon at Delphi, slain by Apollo. She had masters over her and brought them much gain by her soothsaying. She was what is called to-day, a medium, possessed by a demon. Such the spiritualistic mediums are, if they are not outright frauds, who deceive their dupes by clever tricks. And it is a startling and solemn fact that some of the leading educators, college professors, literary men and even so-called clergymen are seeking after these demon-possessed girls and women and pay them well for their damnable practices. Of course this goes under the name of “scientific investigation” or “psychical research.”

The girl here was possessed by a spirit. This was fully recognized by the people of Philippi as well as by the Apostle. "All attempts to explain away such a narrative as this by the subterfuges of Rationalism is more than ever futile." *

* Dean Alford: Greek Testament.

Another commentary on Acts suggests that the damsel was probably a ventriloquist! Through this cunning demon Satan tried to hinder the work by assuming a friendly relation towards the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. She followed Paul and his three helpers and announced before them the fact that they are the servants of the most high God and that they show the way of salvation. This she did many days. That demon spoke the truth, though he could not confess Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Instead of calling them deceivers and warning against the Gospel they brought, this evil spirit applauded them. Instead of assailing the work in an open fashion, he appears as if he would help it along and that by flattery.

His attempt was to support outwardly the work of the Gospel by this loud-mouthed advertising and then to hurt it at the same time. But the Gospel does not need such support. Nor does it need the support of the world, behind which Satan stands as ruler, prince and god. The support and applause of the world does not further the Gospel, but it is the most deceptive hindrance of it Satan has ever invented. And how much of all this we see at the present time!

How often evangelistic movements with their great schemes seek the alliance and assistance of the daily press, which is generally antichristian, to help along the work of the Gospel by giving to it prominence in the eyes of the world; and other facts we leave unmentioned. The world is always the world and friendship with it must mean enmity to God. Such was the attempt of Satan here to ally himself with the servants of Christ and then to spoil them. How well he has succeeded in Christendom of to-day!

But Paul would not accept this testimony. He ignored the attempt at first and goes on his way without paying any attention to the wild cries of the damsel. At last he was grieved and then in the blessed name of the Lord Jesus Christ he commanded the demon to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

"And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks" (Verses 19-24).

The enemy having failed in his wily attempt now shows himself in his true character.

The masters of the damsel who was delivered from the evil spirit, were just as much in Satan's power as the demon-possessed girl. Through these men Satan now opposes the progress of the Gospel by force. Paul and Silas are rushed into the marketplace before the magistrates.

The accusation was that they taught an unlawful religion.

Paul's preachings of course aimed at the idol worship of Rome and of Augustus. In this at least the accusation was true. But the offence of the two men appeared in a worse light, when it was announced that both Paul and Silas were Romans. To proclaim another religion was paramount with treason.

Of course the motives presented before the judges were false and a mere pretence. But Satan succeeded in stirring up the multitudes. The mass of people rose up against them. The Magistrates also joined in and stripped the two messengers of the Lord of their clothes.

This was considered a great shame and insult and they must have felt it keenly. Paul refers to it in his Epistle to the Thessalonians - **"But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know in Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God with much contention"** (I Thessalonians 2:2).

Then in that condition they were severely whipped, many stripes were laid on them. This is one of the beatings with rods to which Paul refers in II Corinthians 11:25 - **"Thrice was I beaten with rods."**

The shame and severe pain from this beating must have been almost unbearable. Then they were cast into the prison and the jailer was especially charged to keep them safely. This individual felt his responsibility and to make them doubly secure he put their feet into the stocks. And thus stripped of the clothes, with lacerated and bleeding backs, their feet were encased in the cruel stocks. The cruelty of man producing such suffering was the work of the enemy. They suffered in patience and the Holy Spirit filling them gave them strength to suffer unjustly.

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here" (Verses 25-28).

Evening comes on and when midnight is reached strange sounds are heard in the dungeon. Curses and vile language are the familiar tones with weeping and gnashing of teeth, which sounded through these miserable Roman prisons.

But now the voice of singing is heard. Prayer and Praise come from the cell of the two imprisoned evangelists.

At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God. The prisoners heard them. No doubt the prayer and praise was fully on the line of the blessed Gospel; they must have praised God for the Lord Jesus, that He suffered for their sins and had saved them. They knew the Lord was with them and the joy of the Lord burst forth in these songs in the night. **“He giveth songs in the night.”**

How this was verified in their case and what a testimony it was. Sufferings like theirs we know no longer; and alas! if some suffering is the lot of some Christians, or a little tribulation comes, there is often murmuring and doubting instead of rejoicing and praising the Lord.

And suddenly there came an answer.

The Lord answered the prayers of His suffering servants by an earthquake. He intervened in their behalf in an extraordinary manner. Rationalism has tried either to make it appear as if this was a coincidence or ignored the earthquake completely. *

* Renan in his *“Apostle Paul”* does not even mention the earthquake.

God shook the whole place when they were still praising Him. The doors were opened, the bonds of the prisoners were loosed, but the prison itself did not fall.

This may be explained by the fact that this prison, like other Roman prisons consisted in excavations in a rocky hillside. The prisoners were chained to the walls and the cave cells were shut by wooden doors with heavy bolts. These burst open and the fetters of the prisoners dropped to the ground. The Lord set the prisoners free. But how many dungeons there have been since then with their uncountable victims with tortured limbs, parched tongues and feverish brow, prisoners who, too, like Paul and Silas, prayed and praised. But no answer came to deliver them. No earthquake opened the doors; they died the death of martyrs-and heaven was silent to their pleas: After God’s Revelation is completed the heavens are silent, and God expects man to believe His Word. A day is coming when once more there will be intervention from above in the affairs of this world.

The jailer was awakened by the shock and was ready to kill himself, seeing that his prisoners had been liberated, for he was responsible, according to the Roman law, with his life for the prisoners. But Paul’s loud cry - **“Do thyself no harm; for we are all here”** kept him from piercing himself with his own sword. Satan would have rushed the jailer into eternity by suicide; but God had something else for the poor Roman heathen.

“Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

“And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren. they comforted them and departed” (Verses 29-40).

The sudden event, the fact that the prisoners had not escaped, the assurance from Paul that they were all there, and perhaps the singing and the prayers of the Apostles, which he may have heard, all carried conviction to his soul.

We see him at the Apostle's feet a trophy of God's Grace, a witness to the power of God and an evidence that the wrath of the enemy must praise Him.

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” was the all Important question which concerns him now more than the few prisoners or even his own physical life. The Grace of God had changed the poor jailer into a thoroughly awakened soul.

The answer to the anxious soul is not slow in coming, **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.”**

And upon this they spake unto him the Word of God, the story of Christ, the blessed Gospel of trusting on Him who died on the cross. Only believing, nothing to do, for God had done it all in His own Son. This is the Gospel of Grace, that a free and full salvation is given to the sinner in simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same way of salvation to-day as it was then.

Everyone who denies and rejects it has no hope and is a lost soul. *

* And how God's way of salvation is rejected in these days is frightful. Salvation by character, a bloodless Gospel is the present day substitute. Thus a certain preacher taught some months ago in a popular monthly “Salvation is not an instantaneous act whereby the sinner is assured of deliverance from hell and enjoyment of heaven, but a lifelong process.” Such a statement sweeps the entire Gospel away.

And the promise was not only to the jailer, but also to his house.

This is a blessed truth alas! too often overlooked by Christian parents or ignored through false teaching.

The promise of course is conditional.

No one can be saved except by personal faith in a personal Saviour. The Christian home stands for much according to New Testament.

The husband is to love his wife even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, so

that the husband represents Christ. The wife is to submit under the husband, as the church is subject unto the Lord, and the children are to obey the parents in the Lord (Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1). The exhortation is given to the fathers, “**bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord**” (6:4).

We can bring our children to the Lord and as we bring them up according to the divine exhortation we have full assurance that they shall be saved.

Not alone did the jailer hear the Word of the Lord, but also all that were in his house, which no doubt meant his household, wife and children and all who belonged to him. And after he had washed their stripes he and all his were baptized straightway. There was no delay with water baptism.

In washing their stripes and welcoming Paul and Silas to his home, setting meat before them, the jailer showed the works which follow faith. And faith had brought joy to his heart. He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

The morning brought an order from the magistrates that these men should be dismissed. But Paul now demands to be heard. These magistrates had dealt in an unjust manner and they had to acknowledge their fault as well as the rights of the Gospel.

He demanded that they come themselves and fetch them out of prison, inasmuch as they had beaten them uncondemned, and the men whom they had treated in this way were Romans. When the magistrates heard the message they feared.

According to Cicero, to bind a Roman was a crime, to scourge him a scandal, to kill him a homicide. It was one of the most valued privileges of Roman citizenship, this immunity from corporal punishment. The cry “*civis Romanus sum*” (I am a Roman citizen) brought even among Barbarians help and safety.

They came therefore out to the prison and besought them, desiring that they should depart out of the city. In this action they acknowledged the wrong they had done. But they were not in a hurry to leave. They first entered the house of Lydia and saw the brethren, whom they comforted. Then they departed. Luke stayed behind in Philippi.

The blessed fruit of the ministry of Paul and Silas formed the beginning of the first assembly in Europe, to which later from Rome the Apostle addressed that precious Epistle of Christian life and experience.

~ end of chapter 16 ~

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