

## A Tale of Two Deliverances

Acts 16.22-34

January 7

God sometimes redirects Christians to new avenues of service. Paul desired to preach the gospel in the Roman province of Asia. The Holy Spirit, however, hindered Paul from entering Asia and redirected the mission team utilizing a vision to Macedonia (Acts 16.6-10). Macedonia, the northernmost province of Greece. The Spirit directed Paul to the European Continent through a night vision in which a man from Macedonia begged Paul, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16.9). Immediately after the vision, the author of Acts joined the missionary team – "we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia" (Acts 16.10). When Paul and Silas left Philippi, Luke did not accompany Paul and Silas. Likely, Luke remained in Philippi as the pastor. Later, when Paul passes through Philippi on his last journey to Jerusalem, Luke rejoined Paul on his travels (Acts 20.6). Maybe Dr. Luke attended the famed medical school of Philippi. Thus, perhaps the face of the man Paul saw in his night vision was Luke pleading with Paul to preach in Philippi.

Acts 16 narrates two deliverances. God delivered Paul and Silas from a physical prison. The message of salvation through Christ delivered a Roman jailer from spiritual prison. What lessons may believers learn from God's mighty acts of deliverance?

**First, God often delivers in difficult circumstances (Acts 16.22-24).** During the ministry of Paul and Silas in Philippi, the gospel broke down barriers between wealthy and poor. God opened the heart of God-fearing Gentile woman named Lydia. Lydia was a wealthy businesswoman importing and selling expensive purple cloth. As well, the gospel opened the heart of an unnamed slave girl as Paul cast out an evil spirit from her. Her masters used her to make money. Her owners brought Paul and Silas before the magistrates with the accusation that Paul and Silas promoted illegal customs and therefore threatened civil order (Acts 16.21). The magistrates stripped the missionaries, beat them with rods, cast them into the innermost dark section of the prison, and secured their feet. Jailers often were retired army veterans.

**Second, God worked in a mighty way to open hearts for the message of the gospel (Acts 16.25-28).** God opened hearts through the testimony of Paul and Silas during suffering. Rather than grumbling and complaining at their illegal treatment, the missionaries loudly worshiped after midnight. (They had captive listeners.) Since Paul and Silas did not escape after the quake likely indicates that Paul and Silas were not praying for release. The earth quaked, the prison shook, the doors opened, and the chains fell off. If prisoners escaped, jailers suffered the penalty of the prisoners. Since the jailer attempted to kill himself, the authorities must have sentenced the prisoners to death.

**Third, God allowed Paul and Barnabas to communicate the message of salvation (Acts 16.29-32).** Paul encouraged the jailer not to kill himself because the prisoners did not escape. Maybe the jailer's contemplation of death opened his heart. Either personally or in the context of the brief trial before the magistrates, the jailer may have heard the message of the slave-girl, "These men, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation, are servants of the Most High God" (Acts 16.27 CSB). The jailer inquired about how he could experience spiritual salvation (v. 30). Paul and Silas instructed the jailer that salvation is through faith, not something one does.

**Fourth, the missionaries communicated the importance of baptism (Acts 16.33-34).** The description about the baptism of the jailer's household is one of the primary passages cited by advocates of infant baptism. Two factors indicate that the jailer may have been older and did not have infants at home. First, jailers were often army veterans. Second, Roman military retirement occurred after twenty years duty. Paul preached to everyone in the house (v. 33). Everyone in the house believed (v. 34). Paul baptized everyone in the house (v. 33). This passage affirms believer's baptism.