

¹⁶ It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer^a, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling^b. ¹⁷ Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, “These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation^c.” ¹⁸ She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment^d.

¹⁹ But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities^e, ²⁰ and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, ²¹ and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.”

²² The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods^f. ²³ When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; ²⁴ and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

^a 16:16 **It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer.** Paul and Silas were in the habit of participating in the customs of the Jews regardless of geography. This included designated times of prayer. They continued their ministry with the women of Philippi in an outdoor setting.

^b 16:16 **a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.** The phrase “a spirit of divination” could be translated, “spirit of a python.” The word was used in Paul’s day of the snake that was killed by the legendary Apollo. It was used of ventriloquists and, hence, became associated with one who speaks through another. This text uses the word in the context of a demon that performed through a girl. There is no record here that the demon accurately predicted the future.

^c 16:17 **Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, “These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.”** Paul and Silas must have been moving by foot from place to place in the city, making connections with anyone who would listen. The girl followed and was *continually* shouting the same words (imperfect tense). We do not know how lucid the girl herself was, but the word “bond-servants” is the common word for *slaves*. The irony of the distinction between slaves who lived to speak the truth and a slave who made a living for her masters by speaking lies should have been evident. There is further irony in that the new words coming from her mouth were the truth.

^d 16:18 **She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment.** Paul and Barnabas showed a substantial measure of patience in the face of this obnoxious demon. We are not told how they managed this for “many days,” but Paul eventually decided he had reached his limit. He was “greatly annoyed.” The word (*diaponeomai*) indicates that enduring the girl’s ramblings required a great deal of *work*.

As Jesus did (compare the healings in Mark 5), Paul makes a distinction between the demon and the girl. With the authority of his King, the apostle commanded the demon to leave and emancipated the poor child.

^e 16:19 **But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities.** This was more a matter of economics than politics, but the only way to get the authorities to act was to turn the disagreement into a political one.

^f 16:22 **The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods.** Jewish law allowed no more than forty lashes (Deuteronomy 25:1-3; 2 Corinthians 11:24-25). Roman law knew no such boundaries.

²⁵ But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; ²⁶ and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped^a. ²⁸ But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" ²⁹ And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰ and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household^b." ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*. ³⁴ And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

³⁵ Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." ³⁶ And the jailer reported these words to Paul, *saying*, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace." ³⁷ But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out^c." ³⁸ The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, ³⁹ and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ They went out of the prison and entered *the house of Lydia*, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed^d.^a

^a 16:27 **When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.** Some have dramatically speculated that Paul saw on a wall the silhouette of the jailer with his sword poised to take his own life and intervened. We learn in verse 29 that the jailer had to call for lights. There were likely no shadows, only an apostle with bad eyes to whom God often revealed helpful information.

^b 16:29-31 **And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.** Defenders of the practice of infant baptism use this verse to support the teaching that a parent can believe on behalf of a child or even that infants should be baptized to bring them forgiveness. This verse and the next (16:32) actually argue against such a practice for three reasons:

- Believing on Jesus, not baptism, is the way to salvation. The joy of the jailer's family came in verse 34 because each member believed.
- The word translated "baptized" means "to immerse." That is possible but not probable with an infant.
- The entire household of the jailer was given the word before they were baptized. When Paul and Silas said, "you and your household," they were saying that each member of the household is saved by believing.

^c 16:37 **But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out."** Paul was likely not being difficult. As usual his concern was for the little ones. These new believers did not need to be bullied by the Romans immediately after their conversions when Paul left town. Paul sought to protect them.

^d 16:40 **They went out of the prison and entered *the house of Lydia*, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.** Observe how unrestricted by location was the

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ministry of the church in Philippi. They met by a river, in jail and in a home. Buildings designed for worship and ministry are helpful tools, but should never become the focal point of “church” planting.

^a 16:16-40 This passage is a study in contrasts. Your worldview determines how your heart prompts you to respond to any given situation. The gospel transforms people because it transforms the way people view the world. Observe the contrast in worldview between and the general population of Philippi and Paul and Silas:

1. Get what you can from others while you can vs. Use what you have to give to those who do not have it. The people of Philippi sympathized with the owners of a slave whose sole value in their eyes was to enrich her masters. Paul had been given apostolic authority over demons and used what was his for the benefit of the slave girl.
2. Join the majority whatever the cause vs. Trust and obey God no matter who is in the majority. The mob was less concerned with facts than with fitting in. Paul and Silas were more concerned with doing God’s will than pleasing men—even at the cost of suffering.
3. There is no hope in a crisis vs. There is hope in a crisis. The jailer thought he had nowhere else to turn in such a crisis but suicide. Paul and Silas assured him that salvation is a possibility in this life.
4. My rights are for my benefit vs. My rights are for serving others. The people of Philippi used their Roman citizenship as a means of satisfying their wants. Paul used his as a means of protecting the fledgling church he was about to leave from energized Roman persecutors.