

Introduction

A. Paul and Silas preach the Gospel in Macedonia (16:11-13)

1. If you remember from last week, after finishing up in Lystra and Derbe, Paul and Silas originally intended to go west into Asia and preach the Gospel:
 - a. However, in 16:6 we learned that the Holy Spirit prohibited them from doing so (READ)
 - b. They then tried to go into Bithynia to the North, but once again the Holy Spirit prohibited them (READ 16:7)
 - c. We aren't told why until we get to vs. 9-10 where we learn God wanted them to go to Macedonia (READ)
2. So, Paul and Silas set out for Macedonia (READ 11-13):
 - a. There's a sense of urgency to obey the Lord and this is reflected in both the word **"immediately"** (in v. 10) and the phrase **"we ran a straight course to..."** (11)
 - b. They arrive at Philippi, which Luke refers to as a **"leading city of Macedonia"** and a **"Roman colony"**—both of these are important (12):
 - 1) Philippi wasn't the largest city or the capital of Macedonia, but it was an important city on two fronts:
 - a) It was important agriculturally because it was situated on a fertile plain nestled at the base of foothills
 - b) It was also rich in precious metals due to its gold, silver, and copper mines
 - c) Both of these made it a fairly wealthy city
 - 2) It was also a Roman colony which means it had all the rights and privileges of a Roman city:
 - a) This means that it didn't pay taxes or tribute to Rome
 - b) It also had its own autonomous government
 - 3) All of this made Philippi the perfect place to begin their ministry in Macedonia
 - c. They are in the city for a few days, but when the Sabbath comes, they head down to the riverside just outside the city gate looking for an opportunity to talk about Jesus:
 - 1) More often than not, when Paul first entered a Gentile city, he would begin his ministry at the synagogue preaching the Gospel to Jews
 - 2) However, v. 13 suggests that Philippi didn't have a synagogue (and this is backed up by archeology):
 - a) In order to have a synagogue, you needed at least 10 Jewish males and the fact that there was no synagogue in Philippi suggests that there was either no population of Jews or very few at most
 - b) When there was no synagogue, Jews would often gather near water because part of their prayer time also included ritualistic washings
 - c) So, knowing this, Paul and Silas head down to the riverside just outside the city gate and discover a group of women who are meeting to pray

- d) Luke doesn't tell us anything about these women, but it's reasonable to assume they were a mix of Jewish women along with at least one female Gentile as we will meet in a moment

3) As we should expect by now, Paul and Silas begin to speak with the women about Jesus

B. The salvation of Lydia (16:14-15; 40)
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1. One of the women who had gathered by the riverside was named Lydia and we learn a fair amount about her (READ 16:14-15):
 - a. Her name indicates she was a Gentile
 - b. She was originally from the city of Thyatira:
 - 1) Thyatira was a wealthy city in the northern part of Asia and was an important commercial center
 - 2) It was a city of tradespeople, which included wool, linen, and leather workers; potters, bakers, slave-traders, copper and silver-smiths, etc.
 - 3) One of the things it was most known for was a dye called Tyrian (tie-ree-an) purple:
 - a) Purple dye, and therefore purple cloth, was very expensive and difficult to make; for this reason, it was generally reserved for nobility, Roman senators and government officials, and the wealthy
 - b) The dye mainly came from a particular kind of snail/shellfish which was only found in this part of the Mediterranean
 - c) According to the Smithsonian Museum, these shellfish would be gathered by the 1000s and boiled for days in giant lead vats to harvest a white chemical that would ultimately turn bright purple or red when exposed to heat and light
 - d) It would take thousands of these snails to produce just one or two yards of purple cloth
 - 4) Thyatira was also known for its guilds which were highly organized, incorporated associations of artisans, tradesmen, merchants, etc. with similar interests who banded together to protect their trade, set prices, train new apprentices, etc.; there were dozens of these guilds in Thyatira, more than any other city of its time
 - c. Lydia was likely a member of one of these guilds because she was a business woman, a **"seller of purple fabrics"** (the third thing we learn about her):
 - 1) This may give us a hint into Lydia's social status in society
 - 2) Due to its cost, the average citizen didn't wear purple; as stated above it was reserved mainly for those of high social status and wealth
 - 3) This would have been the clientele to which Lydia catered
 - 4) We have no way of knowing whether she was wealthy herself, but it's probably safe to assume that she did well enough because it appears she supported her household (Luke makes no mention of a husband)
 - d. The fourth thing Luke tells us about Lydia is that she was religious—Luke refers to her as a **"worshipper of God"** which was a term used to refer to Gentiles who worshiped Yahweh (generally, Jewish proselytes)

2. Based on the world's standards, Lydia had a lot going for her: she was a successful business woman, catering to the social elite, probably fairly well off herself, she had a house and a family she supported, and she was even a religious woman to boot:
 - a. Do you remember what Jesus said about how difficult it is for such people to enter the kingdom of God? READ Matthew 19:16-26; Luke 6:20-26
 - b. The Bible doesn't condemn wealth, possessions, or social status, but does warn that such things can be a stumbling block or hinderance to knowing God:
 - 1) Proverbs 11:28: **"He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like the green leaf."**
 - 2) 1 Timothy 6:7: **"Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy."**
 - 3) Matthew 6:24: **"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."**
 - 4) We saw this repeatedly with Israel throughout the book of Judges—every time they prospered, they turned their back on God
3. Knowing what we know of Lydia, and the warnings we just read, we might expect her response to be similar to that of the rich young ruler, but what we see is something very different:
 - a. First off, she was actively listening to Paul (RE-READ 14b): this word implies not just listening, but receiving and understanding something
 - b. Second, and most importantly, the Lord opened her heart and she **"responded"** to the Gospel and she and her entire household were baptized (RE-READ 15a)
 - c. Finally, she immediately opens up her house in service to the Lord (RE-READ 15b)—we also see this in v. 40 where it appears her house became a central meeting place for believers

C. The deliverance of a demon possessed slave girl (16:16-18)

1. There's a second woman Paul and his companions encounter, but her life is very different than Lydia's (READ 16-19):
 - a. The first thing we learn is that she was a **"slave-girl"**: this word can be used simply to refer to a young maid-servant (like the young woman who answered the door when Peter was released from prison), but the context here suggests something more degrading
 - b. The second thing we learn is that she had a **"spirit of divination"** which means that she was possessed by a demon:
 - 1) More literally a **"spirit of Python"** which was a reference to the serpent who guarded the Oracle of Delphi
 - 2) The Oracle of Delphi was a female priestess and fortune teller who practiced divination in the Temple of Apollo in Delphi on Mount Parnassus in Greece
 - c. Next, we learn that her masters were taking advantage of her unfortunate situation to line their own pockets: she was **"bringing her masters much profit by fortunetelling."** (16)
 - 1) It's unlikely this was a favorable employment situation for her
 - 2) Rather, it was likely a form of abuse where they were using her for their own benefit
 - 3) In fact, their only concern when she is freed from the demon is their own loss of profit (READ 16:19)

- d. Finally, not only was she being used by her masters, but she was being used by Satan to circumvent the Gospel (REREAD 17-18):
 - 1) At first glance, what the girl cries out under the influence of the demon appears to be true and people often compare it to what other demons said of Jesus:
 - a) In Luke 4:34 a demon possessed man cried out: **“What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”**
 - b) In Luke 8:28 when a man possessed by a legion of demons saw Jesus he shouted, **“What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You not to torment me!”**
 - 2) However, if what the woman was saying was true, why was Paul so annoyed with her?
 - a) There are varying opinions/interpretations of what was happening her
 - b) Some believe that because Philippi was steeped in Greco-Roman mythology which was highly polytheistic (many gods), her words would have been interpreted as Paul’s god simply being the “highest” (chief) of many gods:
 - They highlight the fact that this phrase **“the highest”** was also used within Greek religion to refer to Zeus (the chief god) so the audience would not have assumed it was Yahweh
 - They also highlight the fact that the woman actually said that Paul was proclaiming **“a way of salvation”** not **“the way of salvation”** (as it’s rendered in most English translations)
 - In this view, they understand the demon’s words as a form of deception, supporting polytheism and that Paul’s way of salvation was only one way
 - c) Others (like myself), believe the explanation is a bit simpler:
 - The main audience was the Jewish and God-fearing Gentile women and they would have likely understood the phrase **“God, the Most High”** as a reference to Yahweh since He was referred to that way in the OT
 - Paul could have simply been annoyed at the fact that day after day this woman continued to interrupt his teaching with her outbursts (and that may have simply been the demon’s agenda)
2. Either way, regardless of which interpretation you accept, Paul rebukes the demon and delivers the young woman from her demonic oppression (READ 18):
 - a. With Lydia, it’s clear that her response resulted in salvation, but it’s less clear here because Luke doesn’t share any more details
 - b. However, I suspect her response was similar to what we see elsewhere in the Scriptures when people were freed from demons:
 - 1) Mark 5:18-20 (READ)
 - 2) Luke 8:1-3 (READ)

D. Takeaway

1. One takeaway is the urgency in which Paul and Silas made their way to Philippi:

- a. As I noted above, they left Lystra and Derbe immediately and headed straight to Philippi—the reason Paul gave for this is in v. 10: “...**concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them [e.g. Macedonia]**”
- b. They understood their mission, didn’t hesitate, and didn’t stop along the way
- c. We may not always get such clear direction from the Lord, but I wonder if when we do sense God wants us to do something if we give it the same attention and immediacy that Paul and Silas did

Letter to grandma

- 2. Another takeaway is that Paul and Silas didn’t wait for the women to come to them; they sought out an opportunity to talk about Jesus:
 - a. How often do we pray and ask God for opportunity to share our faith?
 - b. How often do we look for ways to create opportunity?
- 3. A third and final takeaway, and probably the most important, is how the Gospel applies to everyone, no matter their place or station in life:
 - a. Here we have two very different women—one a successful business woman, fairly well off, probably a prominent member of society, and the other a young slave girl being used and abused by her masters and Satan
 - b. Yet, both equally need salvation and deliverance, and receive them through the Gospel