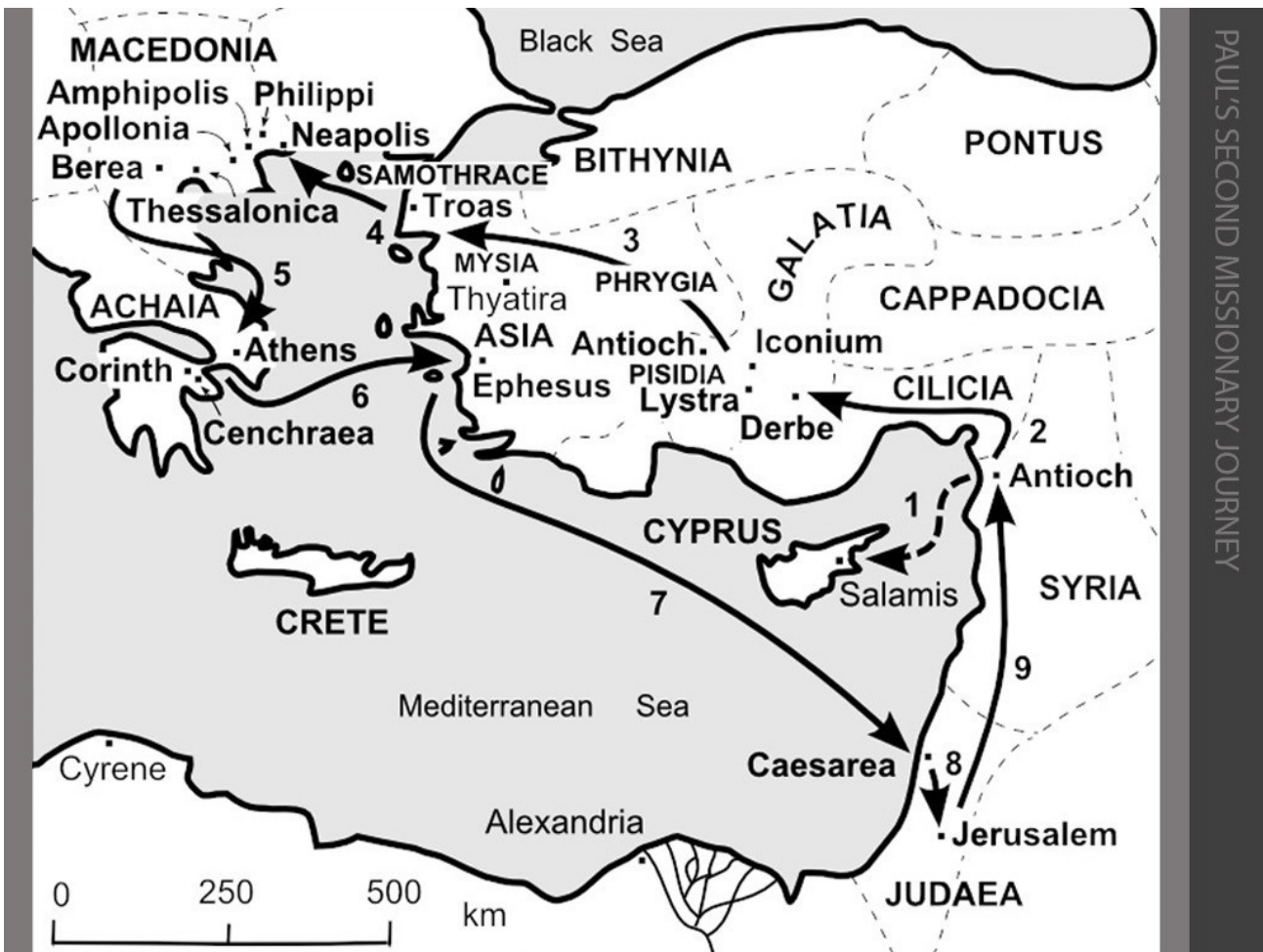


RESCUED BY THE SAME GOSPEL,
RECEIVED INTO THE SAME CHURCH!
ACTS CH16:16-40

INTRODUCTION

We are about to see what Paul's weekly life looked like and how he was always orientated towards God's plan for his life! What does your context look like? What do you do during the week? How and where do you spend your time? Is there a need to re-orientate certain parts of you, back to God and His plan for you?



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BACKGROUND

“The first European Church was founded around A.D.50 in the course of Paul's second missionary journey (Acts Ch16). While the apostle was in Troas, he was instructed in a vision to proceed into Macedonia, and ***Philippi became the first European City in which he preached.*** Apparently the Jewish population in Philippi was small, at least there was no Jewish synagogue. The missionary party, consisting of Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke, met first with some Jewish women at a Jewish place of prayer by the river bank outside the city. The first convert was “Lydia”, a “God-fearer” who responded to Paul by receiving Christian baptism and opening her home to the missionary party. Other significant incidents were the exorcism of the demon from a slave girl and the conversion of the jailer and his family. These early converts were a most diverse and unlikely group with which to found a local church, but the grace of God overcame their differences.

When the apostolic party moved on, Luke was left behind to guide the new work (the use of “we” in the narrative of Acts is dropped until Ch20:5-6 when Paul returns to Philippi). Luke himself is thought by some to have been a Philippian, and was perhaps the “man from Macedonia” that Paul saw in a vision (Acts Ch16:9). The new Church did not forget its founder, however, for gifts were sent to Paul on several occasions (Phil Ch4:15-16).

Paul made a second visit to Philippi around A.D.55-56 on his third missionary journey (Acts Ch20:1-6). Actually, he must have passed through the City twice; on his outward trip toward Corinth and again on his return at the time when he was on the way to Jerusalem with the collection for the poor there. Luke apparently rejoined the party at this latter visit.

After being blocked from going one way (Acts C16:5-10) and having a vision to go another way, the acts of the Holy Spirit “double guidance”, on the one hand “prohibition and restraint”, and on the other hand “permission and constraint”, the disciples headed for Macedonia. ***We too, in our day, need to trust for guidance and rejoice in the restraints and constraints of godly guided ministry!***

After several weeks of ministry in Philippi, Luke chooses to record 3 notable conversions (Acts Ch16:13-40), Lydia, the unnamed slave girl and the jailer! Within this, Luke records for us both the second and third “households” believing and being baptised – Acts Ch10:33-48, Ch16:15 and Ch16:31-34. It would be hard to imagine a more disparate (essentially different in kind) group than the business woman, the slave girl and the jailer!

It was here, in the Philippian jail, that one of the most famous conversions in the history of the Church took place (Ch16:16-34). In the morning when the magistrates were informed by Paul about his Roman Citizenship, that he had the authorities escort him and his team, from Prison the Lydia's home (Ch16:35-40).” (Cited in “Let's Study Philipians – Sinclair Ferguson)

THE RESCUE OF THE SLAVE GIRL! v16-18

V16 – What do we learn about the unnamed slave girl! She is demon possessed and this demon gives certain information, about people and their lives. Demons are evil, fallen angels, that whilst powerful, cannot read our minds or tell the future, but can try and predict things! This poor girl was being exploited by men, who used her for money!!!

Some translations have “Pythian or Pythonic spirit” – literally translated demon possessed!

Luke indicates its evil nature in two ways:

1. The term he uses points to something that is prohibited in Scripture, fortune telling or future telling – Dt Ch18:10; 1st Sam Ch28:8; 2nd Kings Ch17:17; Jer Ch27.
2. The evil profit motive of humans!

V17 – The evil spirit within the girl enabled her to acknowledge the true identity of the men! So, why would an evil demon evangelise?

V18 – **“greatly annoyed”** (only used here and in Acts Ch4:2), literally meaning that they were **worn out, unable to put up with it any more!** Paul, after seeing and hearing this from the slave girl on a daily basis, was “greatly annoyed” or disturbed, even grieved (Remember Ch13:4-12 + the false prophet Bar-Jesus?), in his second encounter of the demonic, commands the evil spirit to depart from the girl, and through the command being in the name of Jesus, the slave girl is healed!!!!

But is she saved? The text does not say so. But look where Luke records it for us, right in the middle of Lydia and her households conversions (Ch16:14-15) and the jailer and his household becoming Christians (Ch16:30-33). I'll let you draw your own conclusions!

THE RESCUE OF THE JAILER! v19-34

The Book of Acts refers ***explicitly to three imprisonments of Paul***: overnight in Philippi (Acts Ch16:19-34); for two years in Caesarea (Acts Ch23:23-26: 26-32; Acts Ch24:27) and for two years in Rome (Acts Ch28:11-31). But Paul's claim that he had "been in prison" very frequently (2 Cor Ch11:23) implies that he was imprisoned more than on these three occasions.

V19-21 - Here is more about the first one! The intervention of the servants of the Most High God, leads to a public outcry, beating and imprisonment, involving so called business men, the city crowds and their Roman appointed magistrates! The owners of the slave girl say nothing about her being healed, but raise issues relating to race (v20 – these men are Jews) and religion (v21 - the Gospel). They play on popularism and opportunism!!

The crowds join in and without any investigation or trial, Paul and Silas (v19) are stripped, beaten with rods numerous times, and imprisoned in the heart of the jail, and placed in stocks (24). ***Imprisonment is used by authorities to control the spread of the Gospel!***

But unlike the apostles in Ch5:17-21 or Peter in Ch12:3-8, being set free from Prison, Paul and Silas, whilst singing and praying with the prisoners listening, a great earthquake (v26) occurred so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, along with all the prison doors opening and everyone's bonds unfastening, stay and through their words the jailer is saved, along with his household!! ***God blesses families under His new covenant of grace v15, v34 + Ch18:8!***

V33 – Just like Lydia's heart being opened and so was her home v15, the jailer washes the wounds of both Paul and Silas before he is washed by being baptised!!! THEN, V34 FOOD – A MEAL WITH JESUS - ENACTED GRACE!!!

THE RESCUE OF THE ROMAN CITIZENS! v35-40

V37 – *At this point in the morning, after a night in Jail, the magistrates deem enough is enough and plan to have the men released, but Paul shouts "civis Romanus sum" meaning "I am Roman citizen", because if you were a Roman Citizen as were Paul and Silas, your citizenship protected you from such beatings and imprisonment without a trial!!*

Once the magistrates realise their significant error, fearing for their own well being, they come and publicly apologise and walk the falsely imprisoned men out of the city!

*But look what happens in verse 40! The new Church – Luke (the "we and us" start in Ch20:5), Lydia, the slave girl and jailer!!! **Racially, socially, intellectually and economically wise, could they be further apart! Yet, the glorious truth of the Gospel, brings people from all parts of the world together! This is the unifying power of the Gospel!***

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THAT'S JESUS FOR YOU!!!***