

TEXTUAL ISSUES (ACTS OF HOLY SPIRIT, CHAPTER 16)

Acts 16:6-21. *The stage is set.* Holy Spirit led Paul and Silas and recently circumcised Timothy, away from preaching in some areas, but toward Troas where they picked up Luke. During the night there, Paul dreamt of a Macedonian who begged him for help. They got ready at once and proceeded forthwith, concluding God had called them to preacher the gospel there to them.

From Troas they traveled via sea and land to Philippi, a Roman colony, populated largely by unbelievers. As such, they didn't expect to find a synagogue, so they went outside of Philippi to the river, hoping to find a place of prayer. They did, and began to speak to the gathered women. One was named Lydia—a dealer in precious cloth—from Thyatira, a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

When her and her household were baptized, she invited the three to her home. "Since I am a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." They relented.

Once at the river, they encountered a fortune-telling slave girl. She earned lots of money for her owners by telling fortunes. Following the guys, she called out "These dudes are servants of the *Most High God*; they're telling you how to be saved."

Paul finally had enough of the pestering; turning around to the girl, he said to "the spirit" by the authority of Jesus the Christ get lost—come out of her. And it did.

Her owners were not happy. So they seized Paul & Silas and took them to the police. Before the judge they alleged these men are Jews and are advocating for us Romans to accept and practice customs which are unlawful. The town was in an uproar.

- Q Why were Lydia and her household baptized?
- Q Why was Paul upset with the slave girl?

ACTS 16:6-21

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. ⁸So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. ⁹During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

¹¹From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. ¹²From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

¹³On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

¹⁵When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

¹⁶Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." ¹⁸She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

¹⁹When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²⁰They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar ²¹by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

Acts 16:22-30. *Holy Spirit protects*. People love conflict, especially if it's against aliens—in this case Paul & Silas. The judges ordered them to be stripped and then beaten. After a severe flogging, they were imprisoned with strict instructions to the jailer to secure them carefully. So, he put them into an *inner* cell, and put their feet in stocks.

The Lord God had other plans. About midnight Paul & Silas were praying, singing How Great Thou Art—the other prisoners were eavesdropping. Then it happened. A violent earthquake shook even the foundations of the prison. The doors flew open—*everyone's* chains came loose. The jailer freaked—he drew his sword, a la harakiri (腹切り)—for he thought the prisoners had done an Elvis—they'd "left the building." Paul shouted out, though, Don't do it! Don't harm yourself. We're all here!

Getting some light on the issue, the jailer rushed in, trembling before Paul & Silas, he asked the big question—"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

- Q Why did the Lord God send an earthquake? Why weren't only the good guys' chains loosened?
- Q Why did Paul call out to the jailer, preventing him from killing himself?
- Q From what did the jailer want to be saved?
- Q Just what was the jailer's question? Was it a good question? A dumb question?
- Q So what answer would you have given him—Roman road? Faith? 3:16? What?
- Q Would that have answered his question?

Answering the right question is the key to the Truth, not necessarily the question that's been asked. Remember:

1. There is no more dangerous question than "What must I do to be saved?"
2. And, there is no more important question than "What must I do to be saved?"
3. Finally, there is no more stupid question than "What must I do to be saved?"

ACTS 16:22-30

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. ²³After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.

²⁷The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

²⁹The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:31-40. *A home is redeemed*. The jailer did not get the answer he expected—Paul told him to believe in the Lord Jesus the Christ. If you do, you and your household will be saved. So together they shared the Lord’s word to him and all the others in his household. In the middle of the night, the jailer washed their wounds and then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

The jailer brought them into his home, fed them—he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.

As the sun rose, the judges sent officers to the jailer to release Paul & Silas. Tell them to leave and go in peace (εἰρήνη).

Paul, however, confronted the captains (στρατηγοὶ). Hey! You beat us publicly, and without a trial no less—even though we are Roman citizens—then prison! Now the judges want to get out of this breach of the law quietly?!! I don’t think so. Let *them* come and escort us out of here.

The captains reported all this to the magistrates who freaked upon hearing the citizenship status of Paul & Silas. They came, eating humble pie, escorting them out of prison and asking them to leave the city.

Paul & Silas did not, for they headed directly to Lydia’s house. They met with the brothers and then went on their way.

- Q Why didn’t Paul answer the jailer’s question?
- Q Why were they baptized “immediately?” Why didn’t they wait until the cousins from Troas could attend?
- Q Why are believers to be baptized? [Hint: see Matthew 3:13-15] What other command of the Lord God are we permitted to put off, to obey only when it’s convenient? [Hint: see Acts 8:36]
- Q Why was the jailer filled with joy? What could have diffused his joy?
- Q Why did Paul call them out regarding his citizenship status—they were, after all, there to release him and Silas?
- Q Why didn’t Paul do as he was ordered—leave the city—and as he wrote in Romans 13?

ACTS 16:31-40

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." ³²Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.

³⁵When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." ³⁶The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace."

³⁷But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

³⁸The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. ³⁹They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. ⁴⁰After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left.

16:1 *Derbe*. See previous notes on 14:6,20. Paul had approached Derbe on the first trip from the opposite direction, so the order of towns is reversed here. *Lystra*. See previous note on 14:6.

Timothy. Since Paul addressed him as a young man some 15 years later (see 1Ti 4:12), he was possibly in his teens at this time. *father was a Greek*. Statements concerning his mother's faith (here and in 2Ti 1:5) and silence concerning any faith on his father's part suggest that the father was neither a convert to Judaism nor a believer in the Christ.

16:3 *he circumcised him*. As a matter of expediency so that his work among the Jews might be more effective. Consider in contrast Titus's case (see Gal 2:3), where circumcision was refused because some were demanding it as necessary for salvation.

16:6 *his companions*. Silas and Timothy. *Phrygia*. The district was formerly the Hellenistic territory of Phrygia, but it had more recently been divided between the Roman provinces of Asia and Galatia. Iconium and Antioch were in Galatian Phrygia. *Galatia*. The name had been used to denote the Hellenistic kingdom, but in 25 B.C. it had been expanded considerably to become the Roman province of that name. *Asia*. This, too, had been a smaller area formerly but now was a Roman province including the Hellenistic districts of Mysia, Lydia, Caria and parts of Phrygia.

16:7 *Mysia*. In the northwest part of the province of Asia. Luke uses these old Hellenistic names, but Paul preferred the provincial (Roman) names.

- ⌘ *Bithynia*. A senatorial province formed after 74 B.C., it was east of Mysia.
- ⌘ *Spirit of Jesus*. As "Holy Spirit" was used at times interchangeably with "God" (see 5:3-4), so here "Holy Spirit" is used interchangeably with "Spirit of Jesus."
- ⌘ *not allow*. The Spirit may have led in any of a number of ways: vision, circumstances, good sense or use of the prophetic gift.

16:8 *Troas*. Located ten miles from ancient Troy. Alexandria Troas (its full name) was a Roman colony and an important seaport for connections between Macedonia and Greece on the one hand and Asia Minor on the other. Paul returned to Troas following his work in Ephesus on his third journey (see 2Co 2:12). At some time--on Paul's second journey or on his third--a church was started there, for Paul ministered to believers in Troas when he returned from his third journey on his way to Jerusalem (20:5-12).

16:9 *vision*. One of the ways God gave direction (cf. 10:3). *man of Macedonia*. Macedonia had become a Roman province in 148BC.

16:10 *we got ready*. Luke joins the group at this point (note use of "we"). The conclusion is that Luke is informing the reader that he had joined the party at Troas.

16:11 *Samothrace*. An island in the northeastern Aegean Sea. It was a convenient place for boats to anchor rather than risk sailing at night. *Neapolis*. The seaport for Philippi, ten miles away; modern Kavalla.

16:12 *Philippi*. A city in eastern Macedonia named after Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. Since it was a Roman colony, it was independent of provincial administration and had a governmental organization modeled after that of Rome (see previous note on 13:14). Many retired legionnaires from the Roman army settled there, but few Jews.

- ⌘ *leading city*. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia. But Macedonia had four districts, and Philippi was in the first of these. Amphipolis, however, was the first city of that district. Luke may have intended to say that it was "a" leading city (there is no indefinite article in the Greek), or that it was the first city reached from the border, or that its fame and significance made it truly the leading city of the area.

¹⁰Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.

16:13 *a place of prayer.* There were so few Jews in Philippi that there was no synagogue, so the Jews who were there met for prayer along the banks of the Gangites River. It was customary for such places of prayer to be located outdoors near running water.

16:14 *Lydia.* A businesswoman. Her name may be associated with her place of origin, the Hellenistic district of Lydia.

- ⌘ *Thyatira.* In the Roman province of Asia, 20 miles southeast of Pergamum (in the Hellenistic kingdom of Lydia). It was famous for its dyeing works, especially royal purple (crimson). See Rev 1:11 and note on Rev 2:18.
- ⌘ *worshiper of God.* Lydia was a Gentile who, like Cornelius (see 10:2), believed in the true God and followed the moral teachings of Scripture.
- ⌘ *opened her heart.* After the resurrection, the minds of the disciples were opened to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45); similarly, Lydia's heart was opened to respond to the gospel message of Paul.

16:16 *spirit by which she predicted the future.* A "python" spirit, a demonic spirit. The python was a mythical snake worshiped at Delphi and associated with the Delphic oracle. The term "python" came to be used of the persons through whom the python spirit supposedly spoke. Since such persons spoke involuntarily, the term "ventriloquist" was used to describe them. To what extent she actually predicted the future is not known.

16:17 *rest of us.* The "we" section (see note on v. 10) ends here and begins again in 20:5.

- ⌘ *Most High God.* A title used by the man possessed by an evil spirit (Mark 5:7). It was a common title among both Jews (see Numbers 24:16; Isaiah 14:14; Daniel 3:26) and Greeks (found in inscriptions). But this title is not used of God in the NT by Christians or Jews (cf. Acts 7:48).

16:20 *magistrates.* The Greek term *strategos* (Latin *praetor*), not the usual word but a term of courtesy used in some Roman colonies, such as Philippi.

16:21 *customs unlawful.* If a religion failed to receive Roman approval, it was considered *religio illicita*. Judaism had legal recognition; Christianity did not.

16:24 *inner cell . . . stocks.* Used not only for extra security but also for torture.

16:27 *about to kill himself.* If a prisoner escaped, the life of the guard was demanded in his place (see 12:19). To take his own life would shorten the shame and distress.

16:30 *what must I do to be saved?* The jailer had heard that these were preachers of a way of salvation (v. 17). Now with the earthquake and his own near death, he wanted to know about "The Way."

16:31 *Believe in the Lord Jesus.* A concise statement of the way of salvation (see 10:43).

16:32 *word of the Lord.* See 10:36. Paul and Silas explained the gospel more thoroughly to the jailer and to all the other members of his household, and they all believed in the Christ and were saved (v. 34).

16:37 *without a trial.* Public beating for a Roman citizen (see v. 38) would have been illegal, let alone beating without a trial. *Let them come themselves.* Paul and Silas were not asking for an escort to save their injured pride as much as they were establishing their innocence for the sake of the church in Philippi and its future.